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THE BEST AUTHORS.

No. 467

IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

A FARCE COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

BY
JOHN KENDRICK STAFFORD

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PRICE, 30 CENTS

NEW YORK
SAMUEL FRENCH
PUBLISHER
28-30 WEST 38TH STREET

LONDON
SAMUEL FRENCH, LTD.
26 SOUTHAMPTON STREET
STRAND

The Charm School

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"If you will take your pencil and write down, one below the other, the words delightful, charming, sweet, beautiful and entertaining, and then draw a line and add them up, the answer will be 'Daddy Long-Legs.' To that result you might even add brilliant, pathetic and humorous, but the answer even then ~~would~~ be just what it was before—the play which Miss Jean Webster has made from her book, 'Daddy Long-Legs,' and which was presented at the Gaiety last night. To attempt to describe the simplicity and beauty of 'Daddy Long-Legs' would be like attempting to describe the first breath of Spring after an exceedingly tiresome and hard Winter."

"Daddy Long-Legs" enjoyed a two-years' run in New York and was then toured for over three years, and is now published in play form for the first time.

Price, 75 cents.

(The Above Are Subject to Royalty When Produced)

SAMUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th Street, New York City
New and Explicit Descriptive Catalogue Mailed
Free on Request

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CHARACTERS

GERALD DONALDSON, *in love with* MARGARET.

AGNES DUDLEY, *his aunt.*

GLORIA CHADWICK, *an aspirant for* GERALD'S *wealth.*

GERTRUDE CHADWICK, *her mother.*

TED BRADLEY, GERALD'S *college chum.*

MYRTLE, *another aspirant for* GERALD'S *wealth.*

IRENE, *also an aspirant.*

MARGARET, *who shuns* GERALD *on account of his*
money.

ALICE, *secretly engaged to* TED.

COREY, *the gardener.*

TOGAN, *a thief.*

SLADE, *also a thief.*

ACT I—*Living room of* DUDLEY *summer home.*
Morning.

ACT II—*The same. Afternoon.*

ACT III—*The same. Night.*



IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

ACT I

SCENE: *Living room, ordinarily furnished. Door, R. and L. Sofa up stage c. No special scenery necessary. Telephone on table.*

DISCOVERED: GERALD and AUNT seated on sofa.

GERALD. But Auntie, the girls simply won't leave me alone. It's terrible to be as popular as I am.

AUNT. Well, then, why don't you marry Gloria and be done with it?

GERALD. (*Eyes AUNT*) What! And pass up my uncle's ten million? You must remember, Auntie, that according to my uncle's will, it will all go to the girl I'm engaged to, if I'm engaged before I'm twenty-one. And think—I'll be twenty-one tonight at midnight. (*Takes deep breath.*) Whew! Won't I be glad? Because then the ten million will be my own. Won't it be grand—to be able to propose to a girl without fear of losing my ten million! (*During this speech GERALD gets up and walks around.*)

AUNT. Come, Gerald, you talk foolishly. What did you think I invited you to this house party for?

GERALD. Well, I don't know, but it looks more and more as if it was to get me engaged before midnight to that confounded Gloria.

6 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

AUNT. Now, Gerald, you know that Gloria's mother is a dear friend of mine, and that personally nothing would suit me more than to have you marry Gloria.

GERALD. (*Makes wry face*) Yes, but where do I come in? Haven't I got the right to do my own picking?

AUNT. Not when ten million's involved.

GERALD. What!

AUNT. See here, Gerald, you don't understand the trouble that money brings a man. Now, if you should become engaged to Gloria before you're twenty-one, then all the burden of caring for the ten million would go to Gloria, and you could just have a wonderful time, letting your wife care for all the money.

GERALD. What! Do you mean to say you think that I would be willing to become engaged to a girl *now—now*—after all the years of dodging engagements that I've had to endure—and let her get my money, when to-morrow's my twenty-first birthday? Not much—I've been through too much suffering on account of girls trying to get me engaged before I'm twenty-one to give up when victory's in sight. Oh, I tell you, I've been through a lot to dodge them, too.

AUNT. Well, every girl at this house party of mine is apparently determined to get you before you're twenty-one, and if you take Gloria, it'll save you from a worse choice. (*AUNT has fan, which she uses.*)

GERALD. (*Makes wry face*) I don't quite see it that way, Auntie. If I *don't* take Gloria, it'll save me for a better choice. And you know what her mother's like. I never heard a woman who could make as many misquotations in a given length of time as she can. Anybody that has any use for either Gloria or her mother can't have any brains at all.

AUNT. I like them both very much. Gerald, you

know there isn't another girl as attractive as Gloria, both socially and—er—physically. And think of the pleasure it will be giving your Auntie.

GERALD. Now, Auntie, you know it isn't fair to expect me to get engaged today, and give up my ten million just on that account. Just think of the pleasure it will give your nephew if I can keep in my own name that batch of ten million beans.

AUNT. What! Such an expression! (*Laughs.*) Well, you are a Bostonian, after all.

GERALD. Well, but——

AUNT. Now listen, nephew. I insist that you treat Gloria nicely, or you shall answer for it. Do you understand?

GERALD. (*Meekly*) Yes, Auntie.

(*Enter GLORIA and MRS. CHADWICK L.*)

AUNT. Oh, good morning, my dear Gloria! How did you and your dear mother sleep last night?

GLORIA. Mother and I both slept very well, thank you.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*With fan*) Yes, indeed, we did. I am sorry that we were so late in rising this morning, and after this Gloria and I will try to do better. (*Laughs.*) You know how the old saying goes—er—er—(*Looks perplexed*)—let me see, what is it? Oh! "Early to bed, early to rise—er—er—will make you neither healthy, wealthy nor wise." (*Laughs.*) Dear, dear! Who would ever think I should nearly forget Wilson's famous war phrases so soon!

AUNT. (*Insinuatingly to MRS. CHADWICK*) Yes, dear, that's all right, not to get up early. (*Laughs slightly.*) Only this nephew of mine has been on edge all morning, waiting to see Gloria. (*Laughs.* GERALD *disgusted and angry business.*)

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Overlooks GERALD'S business*)

8 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

Oh, yes, my dear! I am sure he must be burning to tell her something. Come, dear! (*Locks arms with AUNT.*) Let's go and leave them together. (*Laughs.*) You know, as the saying goes, "Two's a company, and four's a crowd." (*Looks perplexed, as if trying to remember.* MRS. CHADWICK and AUNT leave at R.)

GLORIA. What is it you want to tell me, Gerald dear? (*GERALD business.*) Oh, oh—I'm sure—you—you mean it's about——

GERALD. Yes, that's it. (*Starts to leave L.*) If you will please pardon me. I have an engagement.

GLORIA. Engagement? (*Falls into GERALD'S arms.*) Oh, this is so sudden! (*GERALD tries to free himself.*) Don't be so bashful. Don't you want to say something before you go?

GERALD. (*Coldly*) Miss Chadwick! Pardon me, but I must tell you something very plainly. (*Frees himself.*)

GLORIA. Anyway you say it will suit me.

GERALD. (*Business*) Ah! But you don't understand! Really, Miss Chadwick, just think of the importance it is to me to keep—er—ah—unengaged until tomorrow. Think of the financial loss it would mean to me.

GLORIA. (*Goes to GERALD*) Yes, and to think you are ready to give that up on account of me!

GERALD. Miss Chadwick, I——

GLORIA. Yes, Gerald dear, I know what you mean.

GERALD. Miss Chadwick, I must——

GLORIA. Yes, Gerald dear.

GERALD. Don't call me Gerald dear. Call me——

GLORIA. Darling? Oh, this is so sweet of you. (*Business.*)

GERALD. Miss Chadwick! I——

GLORIA. Yes, Gerald darling.

GERALD. Miss Chadwick, I——

GLORIA. Yes, dear.

GERALD. Miss Chadwick! I told you not to call me dear.

GLORIA. (*Coyly*) Very well, then, darling.

GERALD. Miss Chadwick! We must have an understanding before this goes any farther.

GLORIA. Tell either Father or Mother, dear. It doesn't make any difference.

GERALD. Stop! You don't understand. Oh—I—you—I can't explain it!

GLORIA. That's all right, Gerald dear. I understand perfectly. You *do* love me, don't you? And you *do* want to be engaged right now, don't you? All right, we'll tell Mama right away. (*Takes GERALD'S arm.*)

GERALD. Hey! I—I—— (*Enter TED R. GERALD rushes over and slaps TED warmly.*) Oh, Ted, how do you do! How are you! You don't know how glad I am to see you! (*TED surprised. GLORIA piqued.*)

GLORIA. (*To GERALD*) Well, shall we tell Mama?

GERALD. Oh, ah, no, no, no! You don't understand, Miss Chadwick.

GLORIA. (*Tries to embrace GERALD, who shrieks*) Oh, yes, I do. I understand perfectly. (*Goes R.*) I'll order the announcements right away from the printers'.

TED. Announcements!

GERALD. Ah—ah—ah!

GLORIA. (*To GERALD*) Well?

GERALD. (*Slaps TED*) Ted, old boy, you don't know how glad I am that you're here. (*Waves arms.*) What a wonderful spell of weather we're having!

GLORIA. (*To GERALD*) Well?

GERALD. Ah—ah! (*Picks up old flower-pot or anything.*) Isn't this flower-pot glorious! Ahem! Ahem!

10 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

TED. (*Registers*) Say, Gerald, do you feel real well?

GLORIA. (*Goes to GERALD*) Why, you poor boy, you're all worked up about it. (*To TED*) Do you know, he has an announcement to make?

GERALD. (*Jumps*) Ah—ah—ah! Ted, isn't this wall paper wonderful! Just look at this wonderful design! Ah—ah—ah! (*Enter MYRTLE and IRENE at R. GERALD rushes up to them.*) Ah! Oh, my! How do you do, Myrtle! And Irene! (*Grabs their hands.*) Really, how glad I am to see you! (*MYRTLE and IRENE start to lean on GERALD, who springs away. TED laughs.*) I mean how glad Ted is to see you!

MYRTLE and IRENE. (*Surprised*) Why, Gerald!

GERALD. Ah, ah! Wasn't the sunset beautiful this morning! And the sunrise last evening—simply superb!

ALL. Gerald!

GERALD. Ah, ah! You don't understand——

GLORIA. No. Gerald has an announcement to make.

MYRTLE and IRENE. An announcement!

GERALD. Ah, ah! I have no announcement to make! None whatever! There is nothing to announce.

GLORIA. Yes, but——

GERALD. (*Goes to sofa and falls on it*) Oh, pardon me, girls, but I'm not very good company to-day. I'm not feeling well, and if you all will just run along and leave me——

ALL GIRLS. (*Rush to GERALD*) Leave you! No, never! (*TED laughs at GERALD.*)

MYRTLE. Tell me where you're sick, dear!

IRENE. Let me hold your hand, dear!

GLORIA. Just put your head in my lap, dear!

GERALD. (*Jumps up and upsets girls*) Hey! Hey! Girls, you mustn't! You must leave me alone.

I—er—I—I do like you all awfully well, girls, but I—er—I—I just cannot do anything like that.

MYRTLE. (*Goes to GERALD*) I know what you mean, Gerald. Just let me get these other two girls out of the way first.

IRENE. (*Gets between GERALD and MYRTLE*) Yes, dear. Say that when we're before these other girls. But I know what you mean.

GERALD. What!

GLORIA. (*Gets between GERALD and IRENE*) I understand, dearest. These two other girls embarrass you. But you can kiss me, anyway. (*Starts to kiss GERALD.*)

GERALD. (*Jumps, then has idea*) Listen, Gloria. I'll meet you at the coal-bin in ten minutes. (*Goes to IRENE*) I'll meet you in front of the garbage-cans in ten minutes. (*Goes to MYRTLE.*)

MYRTLE. (*To GERALD*) I wish they'd leave us alone.

GERALD. Er—never mind. I'll meet you on top of the chimney in ten minutes. You'll be sure to be alone there.

GLORIA. Well, girls, I'm afraid I'll have to tear myself away. I must see how the coal bin is.

IRENE. Me, too. I think I'll look at the garbage cans.

MYRTLE. I'm sorry to leave you, but I must have a look at the chimney.

GLORIA and IRENE. What?

MYRTLE. (*Laughs*) Oh, it's an important engagement, eh, Gerald?

GLORIA. (*Laughs*) Very important, eh, Gerald? I'll see about those announcements later.

IRENE. That'll be so romantic, Gerald. A chimney proposal will be sure to be public. (*IRENE, MYRTLE and GLORIA each blow kiss to GERALD when others are not looking, and leave at L.*)

12 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

GERALD. (*Wipes brow*) Well, did you ever see anything like that?

TED. (*Laughs*) Whew! They're all crazy to land you for that money. Congratulate me. I have no such worries. I'm poor.

GERALD. I wish to goodness I was twenty-one today instead of tomorrow.

TED. Cheer up, old boy. This is the final assault. After today—(*Snaps fingers*)—you should worry if you do get engaged!

GERALD. Yes, but that's just it. Between now and tomorrow is what I'm afraid of. They all know about the will.

TED. What, that you get the money if you're not engaged before tomorrow?

GERALD. Yes, and—and Ted, I'm afraid. Auntie is determined I propose to Gloria before the day is over—and the rest of the girls are just as dangerous. You don't know how awful it is not to be able to open your mouth without having somebody take it for a proposal.

TED. Oh, I don't know about that. I used to be that way myself. All the girls used to fall for me.

GERALD. Impossible!

TED. (*Registers*) Oh, no! I had it down pat. I used to rehearse my love lines beforehand, and when I said them to a girl, I used to knock 'em cold.

GERALD. Do you really mean to say that you could get a girl to accept you by reciting love lines?

TED. I surely do.

GERALD. (*Registers*) They must have been wonderful lines.

TED. What?

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Say, Ted! Why not help me out of this hole, if you're such a wonder at the proposing game?

TED. What say?

GERALD. Look! Brush up a little on your dif-

ferent proposals, and get engaged to these girls and save me and my ten million. (*Slaps TED on back.*) I'll make it worth your while.

TED. (*Puts arm around GERALD*) Say, kid, I would, gladly, only—only——

GERALD. What?

TED. It wouldn't be true to the girl I love.

GERALD. What?

TED. That is—ah—er——

GERALD. (*Pats TED*) Out with it, old man!

TED. Have you noticed that there's one girl in the bunch that's here that doesn't seem to pay much attention to you?

GERALD. Well, no. They are all simply crazy over me.

TED. (*Frightened*) What?

GERALD. Oh, yes, there is one. A mighty fine one, too.

TED. You bet!

GERALD. I think I'll marry her.

TED. (*Jumps*) What!

GERALD. (*Innocently*) Huh?

TED. Is—is Alice trying to land you, too?

GERALD. Oh, Alice! Oh, no, I forgot about her. Alice doesn't pay any attention to me, either.

TED. (*Sighs and wipes brow*) Whew! You had me scared! I was afraid Alice wasn't true to me.

GERALD. What?

TED. Yes. I'm going to take her to the races tomorrow.

GERALD. The races?

TED. Yes.

GERALD. Why, you know—if you take a girl to the races here it means you're practically engaged.

TED. Well, that's what I am!

GERALD. (*Shakes TED's hand*) Ted! Old boy! Is it possible? You don't mean to say you've bought a ticket for the good ship matrimony?

TED. That's just what I mean.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) I don't suppose you made any reservations on the ship.

TED. What? (*Laughs.*) Oh, I don't think I'll need any. Alice and I get along pretty well together.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) I'll remind you of what you just said ten years from now.

TED. (*Laughs*) But what about yourself? Have you bought a ticket?

GERALD. No. I can't—as yet. Wait till my birthday tomorrow, when my ten million will be safe. Then I'll buy a whole night boat.

TED. (*Laughs*) Any reservations?

GERALD. I can't say. But what I want to know is, will you help me out?

TED. And do what?

GERALD. Just propose to these girls.

TED. But think of Alice.

GERALD. (*Puts arm around TED*) Ted, old boy, if you do pull me through this difficulty, I'll give you a little nest egg to start married life on.

TED. Yes, but——

GERALD. You have no money, have you?

TED. Hardly a penny.

GERALD. Propose to these girls and you will have. (*Pats TED on back.*)

TED. Money is just what I need, but you must remember I'm already engaged to Alice.

GERALD. Then propose to them—for Alice's sake.

TED. All right, I will.

GERALD. Fine! Between us, we'll get that ten million all right.

TED. I hope it will be between us.

GERALD. What? (*Laughs.*) Oh, yes, that's all right, Ted. You'll get a good slice.

TED. Now listen, Gerald. My proposing to the girls is not enough.

GERALD. It isn't?

TED. No. You're an infamous lying scoundrel.

GERALD. (*Jumps*) What!

TED. (*Laughs and slaps GERALD on back*) Oh, you old tubby! I mean that's what I'll have to tell the girls.

GERALD. Why?

TED. To make sure that the ten million stays between us. (*Both laugh.*)

GERALD. Go ahead—slander me as much as you like before any of the girls, except—except——

TED. Yes?

GERALD. Er—not before Margaret.

TED. Why not?

GERALD. (*Looks down*) Er, Margaret is—different. She doesn't have to hear scandal to keep away from me.

TED. No, I've noticed she shows remarkably good judgment.

GERALD. What?

TED. (*Laughs*) Oh, nothing. I'll have to rehearse my proposals. (*Takes out notebook, examines it, and lays it on table.*) Lucky I happened to have this thing along. They're all copied down cold here.

GERALD. They are?

TED. Yes, I've been using them on Alice.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Ha, ha! Now I see how she came to fall for you.

TED. Huh?

GERALD. All I hope is that you can do as well with my lovers.

TED. Oh, you leave that to me. If I can think up enough slander, I'll guarantee you'll remain a bachelor forever.

GERALD. (*Jumps*) Oh, don't put it to them as strong as that. Remember I have no objections to becoming engaged after today.

TED. Provided you can find the right one.

GERALD. Ahem! I say, remember about Mar-

16 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

garet. Er—it isn't necessary that you propose to her.

TED. Good! I'll confine my proposals to Gloria and the other two that were in here just now. I've no objections to limiting my proposals to three girls. You know, I really feel kind of funny about proposing to them when I'm engaged to another girl!

GERALD. Shh! Here they come. Oh, my gosh! Margaret is with them! (*Fixes tie, etc.*)

(*Enter GLORIA, MYRTLE, IRENE and MARGARET L.*)

GLORIA, MYRTLE and IRENE. Hello, Gerald.

GERALD. Oh, hello.

GLORIA. (*To GERALD*) These other girls acted so suspicious I didn't want to wait at the coal-bin for you. Shall we announce our engagement now?

GERALD. (*Jumps*) Oh—we aren't really engaged, Gloria. That is the misunderstanding.

GLORIA. (*Piqued*) Well, but what you said to me would naturally be taken for an engagement.

GERALD. Would it? What in the dickens did I say?

GLORIA. (*Runs fingers along GERALD'S coat*) You told me that when a couple really loved each other it wasn't necessary for them to propose.

GERALD. (*Jumps*) Oh, ah, ah! Oh, ah! (*MYRTLE and IRENE go up to GERALD, who pretends to cough.*) Achew! Achew!

MYRTLE and IRENE. You poor sick boy! (*GLORIA, MYRTLE and IRENE eye each other unfavorably.*)

GERALD. Yes, I think I am coming down with rheumatism and croup. (*Coughs.*) Really, girls, you had better stay away, or you might catch your death of spinal meningitis. (*MARGARET pantomimes to TED to GERALD'S displeasure. MARGARET looks surprised at GERALD'S remark. GERALD moves away*)

from girls, coughing furiously and looking at MARGARET out of corner of eye. GLORIA, MYRTLE and IRENE follow GERALD.) Look out, girls! I may have an attack of hydrophobia any minute!

GLORIA, MYRTLE and IRENE. Oh! Oh! You're really sick!

GLORIA. (*Steps forward*) Let me take care of you.

MYRTLE. (*Steps forward*) No, let me.

IRENE. (*Steps forward*) No, let me.

MYRTLE. (*To GERALD*) Really, Gerald dear, I couldn't wait for you on top of the chimney.

IRENE. (*To GERALD*) I didn't like to wait for you by those smelly garbage-cans.

GERALD. Oh, oh! Oh, girls! I'm really coming down with hydrophobia! Look out! Keep away! (*Business.*)

ALL. Oh! Oh!

TED. (*Wholeheartedly*) Yes, girls, you want to keep away from him. (*To MARGARET*) He's led such a dissipated life I wouldn't be surprised if he were infected with everything.

ALL. What!

GERALD. (*Motions to TED*) Ah! ah!

TED. (*To MARGARET*) Why, Gerald is the biggest cur on this side of the grave! His private life is positively disgraceful!

ALL. What?

GERALD. (*Motions to TED and MARGARET*) Ah! Ah!

TED. Why, surely, girls. (*To MARGARET*) He is positively the vilest character I've ever seen. It's a wonder to me how he manages to hide it.

GERALD. (*Goes to TED*) Cut that out!

TED. (*Surprised*) What? Why, this is what you wanted.

GERALD. Ah—er—but—(*Looks at MARGARET and swallows*)—ah—er—but—

18 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

GLORIA, MYRTLE and IRENE. (*Go to TED*) Tell us about Gerald.

TED. (*Rather pleased at attention*) Why, surely. (*GERALD jumps.*)

MARGARET. (*Coolly*) If you will please excuse me, I must be going. (*Exits L.*)

GERALD. Yes, er—ah—— (*MARGARET and GERALD exit L. GLORIA, MYRTLE and IRENE all look L.*)

TED. (*Takes deep breath*) Well, I hate to say this, but—(*All girls looks L.*)—Gerald has a horrible past. (*GLORIA exits L. MYRTLE and IRENE look L. nervously. TED does not see this bus. TED looks L. and notices GLORIA has gone. TED speaks louder.*) Ahem! Gerald is absolutely unfit for any woman's love! (*MYRTLE tiptoes out L. TED looks L. and sees MYRTLE has gone. TED speaks very loud.*) As I was saying—(*Waves arm dramatically*)—Gerald is unfit—(*Exit IRENE at L. on tiptoe*)—for human companionship! (*TED looks L. and jumps. Enter MYRTLE L.*)

MYRTLE. Oh, Ted, Gerald sent me back here. He said you could do something for me that would be a great help to him.

TED. (*Thinks, then catches MYRTLE's hand and arranges all chairs two by two.*) Sit down, Myrtle. (*MYRTLE sits down. TED puts rug over dirty spot in front of chair, and slyly opens book on table.*)

MYRTLE. (*Rapturously*) Oh, what is it?

TED. (*Looks at book*) Myrtle! (*Clasps hands and rolls eyes upward.*) Do you know that name is the sweetest name on earth to me?

MYRTLE. (*Rapturously*) Oh, Ted!

TED. (*Looks at book*) Myrtle—I—I cannot restrain my love for you! It wells up irresistibly! It fills my heart with longing! It thrills the very last fiber of my being! Myrtle! I—I love you!

MYRTLE. (*Rapturously*) Oh!

TED. (*Looks at book, gets down on knees on rug.*)

Holds book behind his back and turns page.) Here I am, kneeling before you, pleading before you, to let me be your constant companion, your devoted slave—your husband—throughout life! (*Glances at book.*) Myrtle! Every moment of my life is filled with dreams of you! Every impulse of my heart turns toward you! Every drop of my blood is on fire for you! Myrtle, Myrtle, will you be my wife? (*Bus.*)

MYRTLE. (*Rapturously*) Oh, Ted, I didn't know you could talk like that!

TED. Yes, but Myrtle, that's not the question. Will you—will you marry me?

MYRTLE. Oh, Ted, if you only had ten million, I'd marry you in a minute.

TED. (*Slyly*) If you say you'll marry me, I *will* have part of ten million.

MYRTLE. (*Takes deep breath*) Oh, Ted—I—I—don't know what to say. You know—you know—(*Looks down and swings shoulders*)—Gerald is madly in love with me.

TED. (*Registers*) Huh?

MYRTLE. Yes, and—and if I—if I decide to accept him before tomorrow I—I'll be worth ten million dollars.

TED. (*Looks at book and turns several pages hurriedly to new place.*) Myrtle! Money can't make happiness! (*Looks at book.*) Here is my opponent, with nothing to offer you but money! Cold, cruel, heartless money! And here I am, kneeling before you, offering you my heart's blood of devotion, of sacrifice! (*Looks at book.*) I offer you, not money—(*Swallows*)—but my own true love, my—(*Swallows*)—er—unchangeable—(*Looks at book and swallows*)—uncorrupted and sincere love. (*Looks at book.*) Love that is pure, that is absolutely given to you alone! (*Swallows.*) Myrtle! You must choose between me—and money! (*Gets*

up.) Although you may doubt it, I swear that Gerald doesn't love you! And Gerald's life is a scandal! He is false—he is vile! He is wicked!

MYRTLE. Yes, Ted, I will marry you!

TED. (*Gives happy jump, grasps MYRTLE's hand and immediately kisses her.*) You will? That's—that's fine! And you'll love me and be true to me to the end?

MYRTLE. Yes, Teddie dear, I will. (*They kiss. A small ribbon from MYRTLE's dress catches on lapel of TED's coat.*) And you'll take me to the races tomorrow, Teddie dear?

TED. Ah—what?

MYRTLE. You'll take me to the races tomorrow of course, won't you?

TED. Ah—er—yes—of course I'll take you. Ah—er—my dear, if you will excuse me one minute, I will be right back. (*Exits R. MARGARET enters L.*)

MYRTLE. Oh, hello, Margaret! (*Catches her hand and jumps around.*) Do you know, I'm just engaged to Ted? I really don't care anything about him, but he'll be good to fall back on if Gerald doesn't come across. (*Laughs.*) Do you know, Gerald must have some awfully black chapters in his life? Ted was just telling me.

MARGARET. (*Looks sad*) Never mind, dear. I don't care to talk about Gerald.

(*Enter TED and GERALD at R., very happy. GERALD goes up to MARGARET, who turns her back. TED goes to MYRTLE.*)

TED. Myrtle—— (*MYRTLE turns her back on TED and goes to GERALD. TED registers.*)

MYRTLE. Oh, hello, Gerald! (*Touches his coat with her fingers.*) I am so glad you're here. I was afraid you'd run off and left poor little me all alone. (*GERALD backs away. MARGARET looks at GER-*

ALD.) But you wouldn't do that, would you, Jerry dear?

GERALD. (*Gasps—business with TED*) Ah—er—I—er—it's very close in here. It's too hot for me in here! (*Looks at MARGARET.*) Let's go outside. (*Goes to MARGARET, who turns away.*)

MYRTLE. Certainly. (*Goes up behind and twines arms with GERALD.*) Are you coming with Ted, Margaret? (*GERALD and MYRTLE leave at L.*)

MARGARET. Yes. (*TED and MARGARET leave at L. Enter MRS. CHADWICK and GLORIA at R.*)

MRS. CHADWICK. And no matter who it is, my advice is, always accept a proposal. Better to have loved and lost, than never to have proposed at all, as the saying goes.

GLORIA. Yes, but Mother—— (*Enter TED at L.*)

TED. Oh, Mrs. Chadwick, have you seen Gerald?

MRS. CHADWICK. Why, no, not this minute. Tell me, is there anything wrong with the dear boy?

TED. Oh, yes, there is. He ought to be around here somewhere.

MRS. CHADWICK. Do you wish us to look for him?

TED. Yes, yes, that would be very good.

MRS. CHADWICK. Come, Gloria.

GLORIA. (*Hastily powders nose, etc.*) Yes, Mother, in just a minute.

(*MRS. CHADWICK exits L. TED takes deep breath, sets his teeth, and goes up to GLORIA.*)

TED. Gloria! Just a minute before you go out. I want to warn you about Gerald.

GLORIA. (*Sticks nose in air*) I don't care to hear any slandering of that dear boy. You're merely jealous and wish to harm him.

TED. I don't. I'm doing him a favor. Listen, Gloria, he is a rank counterfeit!

GLORIA. A what?

TED. A rank counterfeit. Don't you know he's lost his uncle's fortune on account of his conduct—that he will never get the ten million—on account of his conduct?

GLORIA. What?

TED. Absolutely. He is penniless—absolutely penniless.

GLORIA. Oh—oh—oh! I'm—I'm so glad you told me this!

TED. Yes, but that's not all. Gerald is a thief.

GLORIA. A what?

TED. A thief—a gambler—a drunkard—and possibly a murderer!

GLORIA. Oh!

TED. Yes, he's awful! He's the leader of a gang of thieves and thugs.

GLORIA. Oh, oh!

TED. And that's not all! He is treacherous—especially to his friends.

GLORIA. Oh!

TED. Particularly to his girl friends. He's absolutely untrustworthy.

GLORIA. Oh, oh, oh!

TED. Yes, and if he ever marries anybody, it will be just on purpose to kill them and get whatever money they have.

GLORIA. Oh, oh, oh! (*Goes to TED*) Protect me from him! He wants to marry me—he insists on it! Save me!

TED. (*Puts arm around GLORIA*) That's exactly why I've told you this—to keep you from marrying Gerald.

GLORIA. Oh, yes, but I'm afraid he won't take no for an answer.

TED. Never fear—I know how you can keep free from him.

GLORIA. What?

TED. Become engaged to me. See? Just for the time being, until he is twenty-one, when he will be publicly disowned.

GLORIA. Oh—but we can't become engaged—we're comparative strangers.

TED. Gloria! (*Clasps hands and rolls eyes upward.*) Gloria! Do you know that name is the sweetest name on earth to me?

GLORIA. Oh, Theodore!

TED. Gloria! Even if we are comparative strangers, I cannot restrain my love for you! It wells up irresistibly! It fills my heart with longing! It thrills the very last fiber of my being! Gloria! I—I love you!

GLORIA. Oh, Theodore, this is so sudden!

TED. (*Kneels*) Gloria! Here I am kneeling before you, as vassals did before their queens centuries ago. Here I am, pleading with you to let me be your constant companion, your devoted slave—your husband—throughout life! Gloria! Every moment of my life is filled with dreams of you! Every impulse of my heart turns toward you! Every drop of my blood is on fire for you! Gloria, Gloria, will you be my wife? (*Bus.*)

GLORIA. (*Rapturously*) Oh, Theodore, you fairly take my breath away!

TED. (*Gets up*) Gloria! Don't put me off! Every moment is precious! Your mother may come back and insist on your marrying Gerald.

GLORIA. (*Coyly*) I—I—I don't think mother'll be back.

TED. No? Then come over and let me tell you how much I love you. (*TED pulls hesitating GLORIA to chair.*)

GLORIA. Oh, Ted, I don't know what to say. (*GLORIA sits on arm of chair, TED has arm around her.*)

TED. Listen, Gloria dear. (*Swallows.*) All my

life I have never—(*Swallows*)—paid any attention to any girl. And then I saw you! Then I knew that I had found my heart's companion—that you, and you alone, are the person who is my ideal—that you—(*Swallows*)—and no one else but you, can turn my life into happiness and sunshine—by consenting to be my wife!

GLORIA. (*Takes deep breath*) Oh, Ted, this—is—so—sudden!

TED. Yes, but not half as sudden as the unrestrainable love that thrilled me the moment I saw you! Gloria! Gloria! How can you hesitate? Can't you see that I love you—and you alone?

GLORIA. Very well, then—I'll accept you.

TED. (*Kisses GLORIA*) Fine, Gloria, fine!

GLORIA. But will you be able to make some money?

TED. I surely will. Being engaged to you makes it sure.

GLORIA. What?

TED. I mean you're such an inspiration, dear.

GLORIA. (*Pats TED*) Oh, thank you for saying that, Teddie. I'm sure we'll always love each other.

TED. Always.

GLORIA. And never care for anyone else.

TED. (*Swallows*) I haven't a particle of doubt about that, dear.

GLORIA. What makes you tremble, dear?

TED. Oh, was I?

GLORIA. Yes. Why?

TED. I was thinking of the great risks I'd take for the sake of the girl I hope to marry.

GLORIA. That's noble of you to say that about me, dear. I'm sure you wouldn't stop at anything.

TED. I haven't stopped at anything yet, my dear.

GLORIA. Oh, Ted, I suppose you want to take me to the races tomorrow.

TED. (*Jumps*) Hey!

GLORIA. What made you jump, dear?

TED. I jumped at the thought of taking you, dear. It will make me so happy. (*Mournful look.*)

GLORIA. (*Picks MYRTLE'S ribbon off TED's coat*) Ted! What does this mean? (*Stands up.*)

TED. Ah—oh, ah—— (*Takes ribbon.*) Oh, what a pretty ribbon! Where did you get it?

GLORIA. Ted, how dare you! Why, that's Myrtle's ribbon—off her dress!

TED. Oh, ah—oh, ah—— Er—Gloria—er—ah—let me explain.

GLORIA. Ted, I——

TED. Oh, let me see, what coat have I on? (*Looks at coat.*) Oh, ah—I see—this is Gerald's coat—I put on Gerald's coat by mistake!

GLORIA. (*Shakes head*) Ted, you——

TED. Just listen, Gloria. Let me explain. You don't know how sorry I am it happened. Really, this is the way it happened. You see, Gerald and I slept together last night, and Gerald must have walked in his sleep and changed our coats around. So this morning that's why I must have put on the wrong coat.

GLORIA. I don't believe it. The coat you have on fits you perfectly.

TED. Oh, I must complete my explanation. Gerald is so absolutely poor I gave him this coat yesterday—he had gambled away his own. That's why it fits me.

GLORIA. How does that explain about Myrtle's ribbon?

TED. (*Laughs*) Oh, don't you see? It's all as clear as I can make it. It must be that Gerald is secretly engaged to Myrtle, and that he had had her in his arms.

GLORIA. Oh, oh, oh! The horrid thing! And mother says he cares for nobody but me!

TED. Exactly, Gloria. That explains it all perfectly.

26 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

GLORIA. Oh, Ted, would you mind keeping our engagement a secret? Mother would be furious to hear I've given up Gerald.

TED. (*Registers*) Gloria, I agree with you perfectly. I think it would be much wiser to keep our engagement an absolute secret.

GLORIA. Oh, thank you—you're so kind.

TED. Don't mention it.

(*Enter MRS. CHADWICK L.*)

GLORIA. Oh, hello, Mother. We were just talking about you.

TED. Yes—and Gerald, too. Do you know, I'm worried about him?

MRS. CHADWICK. What is that?

TED. Mrs. Chadwick, I hate to tell you, but Gerald is far from being respectable.

MRS. CHADWICK. What?

TED. The truth is, Mrs. Chadwick, that Gerald is a fearful degenerate, not fit to become any woman's husband. He has lost all his money——

MRS. CHADWICK. Sir! What do you mean by such falsehoods? I don't believe a word you say. Gloria and I will hear none of your slandering. Come, Gloria, let us go outside and look for Gerald. I'm sure he's wondering what can be keeping you.

(GLORIA *hesitates, looks from MRS. CHADWICK to*
TED. MRS. CHADWICK *takes GLORIA'S arm and*
both leave R. GERALD enters L.)

GERALD. (*Shakes hands with TED*) Congratulations, old man! I heard everything. You're a wonder!

TED. Oh, well, I admit the girls can't resist me. But I'm afraid Mrs. Chadwick will turn Gloria around again into liking you.

GERALD. Never fear, old top, you painted me so black that she won't look at me after this. Besides, she thinks I've lost the ten million.

TED. (*Laughs*) I know. That turned the trick. She wouldn't have given you up without it.

GERALD. I know—it was a good idea. Do you know, she had the nerve to insist that I had proposed to her this morning?

TED. What! You don't say! And if she had ever told that to her mother, it would have been good-bye ten million to you. (*Gestures.*)

GERALD. Yes. But what gets me is the way Myrtle took my arm right after you had finished proposing to her. What's the matter—doesn't she know that when she's engaged to one fellow she must leave the others alone?

TED. I can't understand how she'd want to pay any attention to you when she's engaged to me.

GERALD. What?

TED. Nothing. I've got to get engaged to Irene now. Whew, this is some life! (*Wipes brow.*)

GERALD. I tell you what to do. I'll get Irene in here, and I'll be insolent and will pretend to be ravingly drunk. Then you can play the part of the handsome hero—rescue Irene from me, propose to her, and be accepted. Then she'll go out and warn the other girls to keep away from me—that she saw me in a drunken and dangerous condition.

TED. And also probably tell them that she's just become engaged to me. My, if Alice ever hears—I—well, I won't marry Alice.

GERALD. Cheer up, old man. You probably wouldn't anyway.

TED. Huh?

GERALD. Alice has good judgment.

TED. I know—that's why she chose me.

GERALD. You don't like yourself, do you?

28 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

TED. I like myself too well to have those other girls go and spoil my chances with Alice.

GERALD. Cheer up, they won't tell anyone they're engaged to you.

TED. Good!

GERALD. Because that's nothing to be proud about.

TED. Huh?

GERALD. (*Laughs and slaps TED on back*) When this is over, you'll get enough of my ten millions to keep both you and Alice comfortable.

TED. Comfortable, if Alice doesn't hear about it.

GERALD. Now listen! I'm expecting Irene in any minute. You play the hero stuff. Treat me rough!

TED. All right, and you pretend to be drunk. You know how to act the part—you've been drunk enough times.

GERALD. (*Jumps*) Huh?

(IRENE enters L. GERALD pretends to be drunk.
IRENE stops near entrance, horrified.)

IRENE. Oh!

GERALD. I say—hic—hic—old top, I'm going to kill the woman I marry——

TED. (*Nearly weeping—does not look at IRENE*) Gerald, Gerald, why won't you leave liquor alone? Some day you will commit a fearful crime, even worse than the crimes you've done now. Gerald, Gerald, don't you know that you're breaking your poor mother's heart? And your social position—don't you realize that your beastly debauchery will make you a social outcast?

GERALD. Hic—hic!

TED. (*Grandiloquently*) Gerald, Gerald, I will have to tell you more! You've lost the ten million on account of your scandalous conduct.

GERALD. (*Jumps, then rushes angrily at TED*) Ah! Hic! I'll thrash the man that tells me that!

I'm a bloodthirsty villain! Prepare to die! (*Looks at IRENE for first time.*) Oh, hic! (*Smiles.*) Come in here, li'l girl. I—hic—want to talk to you. (*Goes to IRENE and drags her in.*) Ah—hic—come on—I want to—hic—shing a shong! Hic—hic! Come, Ted—hic—give ush a tune.

TED. (*Mournfully*) Gerald, you're exposing yourself! Leave that beautiful girl alone!

GERALD. (*Winks at TED, who winks back*) Aw—hic—hic! She's not sho beautiful as she looks! Look—hic—I bet she wears rats! (*Pulls IRENE's hair—rat falls out. IRENE screams and replaces rat.*) Dat's shall right, li'l girl—I doesh a lot worse than that to my wife.

IRENE. Your wife?

TED. (*Desperately*) Gerald! You're telling everything!

GERALD. (*Winks at IRENE*) Shh, li'l girl—I'm married twice.

IRENE. Oh! Oh!

GERALD. (*Grabs IRENE roughly*) But you don't care 'bout dat, li'l girl, do you?

TED. (*Weepingly*) Gerald! Keep quiet, or you'll tell her everything.

GERALD. Yesh, yesh! I murdered 'em both. Hic! They both wore rats. I can't stand rats. Hic!

IRENE. (*Screams*) Oh, Ted, he doesn't mean it!

TED. (*Mournfully*) Irene, don't ask me whether it's true or not, because I don't want to tell you.

GERALD. Hic—hic!

IRENE. What—married twice and lost all his money?

TED. Shh! He's ugly on that subject since he lost his ten million.

GERALD. (*Advances angrily*) Hic—hic! What'd you shay 'bout my ten million? (*Orchestra begins to play fitting tune.*)

TED. Nothing, Gerald.

30 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

GERALD. (*Grabs IRENE angrily*) Well, what did you shay 'bout it?

IRENE. (*Screams*) Help!

GERALD. I shink I'm going to handle you rough.

IRENE. Help—Ted!

TED. (*Pleadingly*) Gerald, hide your beastly nature! Remember you are talking to the most beautiful girl on earth!

GERALD. Beautiful—hic—is she? Well, we'll shee—hic! hic!—'bout dat. (*Slaps IRENE on back.*)

TED. (*Grandiloquently*) Gerald! (*GERALD stops momentarily.*) Leave that lovely girl alone!

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Huh, huh, huh! Listen to him talk, Irene! Huh, huh, huh! Why, he can't stop me! Hic! hic! (*More bus. with IRENE.*)

IRENE. (*Screams*) Help! Ted! Help!

TED. (*Advances dramatically*) Stop!

GERALD. I won't!

TED. You will! (*Puts arm around IRENE and takes her majestically from GERALD. TED winks at GERALD.*) Stand back there! And keep your hands off this precious girl!

GERALD. (*Very angry*) Ahh! Who are you? To take anybody out of my hands like that! Ahh! I'll kill you both! (*Rages around.*) I'll kill you both!

TED. (*Dramatically*) Stand back, there!

GERALD. (*Cringes—changes to mournful, imploring attitude*) Oh, Ted, you know I'm afraid of you. But won't you let me play with Irene?

TED. No!

GERALD. Hic—why not?

TED. (*Dramatically*) Why? Why (*Looks at IRENE.*) Because—because I love her!

IRENE. Oh!

TED. Yes! It is out! I've kept it in as long as I can! But I cannot restrain myself any longer!

Irene! Do you know that is the sweetest name on earth to me?

GERALD. (*Charges and roars*) Ah! ah!

IRENE. (*Clutches TED*) Oh, oh!

TED. (*Waves him back*) Stand back! (GERALD *turns his back and laughs.* TED to IRENE) Dearest, I have loved you, and only you, from the moment I first saw you! I've fought it—I've tried to keep you from seeing it, but this has brought it out.

GERALD. (*Charges and roars*) Ah! ah!

IRENE. (*Clutches TED*) Oh!

TED. (*Waves him back*) Stand back! (GERALD *turns his back and laughs.* TED to IRENE) Dearest, let me protect you from Gerald in the way I want to protect you—as the girl of my dreams—as the girl whom I love—as the girl whom I am to marry! (GERALD *bus.*) Dearest, will you marry me?

IRENE. I—I—I think so.

TED. (*Snatches kiss*) Settled! Now let's—er—keep this a secret. Shall we?

IRENE. Yes.

TED. (*Kisses IRENE*) That's good. So is that, too. Now we shall see about Gerald. (*To GERALD*) Gerald, you drunken coward, I want you to understand that this jewel is mine—that you will have to leave her distinctly alone—understand, distinctly alone!

GERALD. (*Looks at IRENE a moment*) Hic! hic! Then good-bye, Irene, and I want you to leave me distinctly alone.

IRENE. Oh! All right! I'll be satisfied with Ted. (TED *winks to GERALD.*) You love me faithfully, don't you, dear?

TED. There's no one I love half as much as the girl I'm going to marry, dear.

IRENE. That's right, dear. And—oh, Ted?

TED. Yes?

32 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

IRENE. You'll take me to the races tomorrow?

TED. (*Jumps*) Oh, ah——

IRENE. What?

TED. Certainly—er—my dear. Unless I am sick.

IRENE. Sick?

TED. Yes, I am subject to heart trouble at times. Er—my dear—let's not think of the races tomorrow. Er—just think of today—of our engagement which we must keep a secret.

IRENE. Yes, Teddie dear. But don't you want our engagement to be known to anybody?

TED. No, dearest.

IRENE. Not even to Myrtle?

TED. (*Jumps*) No.

IRENE. Or Gloria?

TED. (*Jumps*) No.

IRENE. Then I'll tell Alice.

TED. (*Jumps and shrieks*) Hey! No! Oh, ah! I feel my heart spasms coming on. Oh, ah! Let's go out into the open air. Ah, oh!

IRENE. You poor sufferer! Do the attacks last very long?

TED. It depends. Ah, ah! I think this one will be over after to-morrow.

(*ALL leave at R. ALICE and MARGARET enter at L. Orchestra stops playing.*)

ALICE. Why, Margaret, your eyes are all red. It looks as if you have been crying. What is the matter?

MARGARET. Oh, nothing, Alice dear.

ALICE. Oh, Margaret, do you know all the girls are talking about Gerald? Ted's come out and said Gerald is living a horrible private life.

MARGARET. (*With a catch in voice*) Oh, Alice, I—I wish you wouldn't talk about it. Please talk about something more pleasant.

ALICE. (*Happy*) All right, I will. Can you keep a secret?

MARGARET. What is it?

ALICE. (*Whispers*) Do you know a certain young man has been engaged for over a month?

MARGARET. (*Jumps*) Who? Gerald?

ALICE. (*Laughs*) No—Ted.

MARGARET. (*Puzzled*) Oh, yes. But was it a month ago?

ALICE. (*Looks down*) Yes, a month ago to-day.

MARGARET. That's strange. Myrtle told me it happened this morning.

ALICE. What!

MARGARET. What?

ALICE. How does Myrtle know about it?

MARGARET. Why wouldn't she know, dear, when she's the girl he's engaged to?

ALICE. (*Cries*) Oh, oh, oh! It must be so! Ted is false!

MARGARET. What's the matter, dear?

ALICE. Oh, oh, oh! Everybody said that Ted made love to every girl that came along—that he wouldn't be true to me.

MARGARET. (*Pets ALICE*) Oh, what do you mean, dear? Is Ted engaged to you?

ALICE. Y—v—yes.

MARGARET. Well, then perhaps it's all right, dear. I wouldn't think Ted would be false. Perhaps it's just a story of those girls who are trying—to—land Gerald—(*Looks down*)—and his money.

ALICE. I—I hope it is that.

(*Enter TED at R.*)

..

TED. Alice!

ALICE. Oh, oh, Ted!

TED. (*Touches ALICE affectionately*) What is it?

34 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

MARGARET. Somebody said something about your not being faithful to Alice, but I'm sure it's not true.

TED. Margaret, thank you for saying that.

ALICE. (*Cries*) I—I—I don't believe it, either.

TED. That's right, Alice dear, no matter what you hear about me in the next twenty-four hours, don't believe a word of it.

ALICE. I—I won't. I—I—I'm sure you're true to me, aren't you, Ted?

MARGARET. Yes.

TED. If you knew what I've agreed to put up with for your sake, Alice, you would be sure that I'm true to you.

ALICE. A—all right, Teddy boy. (*Stops crying—smiles.*) I'll believe you.

TED. Do—and nobody else.

MARGARET. Oh, Ted!

TED. Yes?

MARGARET. (*Looks down*) Er—ah—it isn't true that Gerald is a bad character, is it?

TED. Absolutely. He is positively indecent and unfaithful to every girl he meets.

MARGARET. Oh, oh! (*Cries.*)

TED. He's unfit to deserve any woman's love.

MARGARET. (*Cries*) Oh, oh!

(*Enter GERALD at R.*)

GERALD. (*Breathless*) Ted, you get out of here!

TED and ALICE. Oh! (*Much bus. between TED and GERALD.*)

TED. Well, Alice, let's go. Gerald seems to be displeased about something. (*TED takes ALICE and both leave at L. MARGARET starts to follow. GERALD catches her arm.*)

GERALD. Please—one moment, Margaret.

MARGARET. (*Cries*) Let go!

GERALD. Margaret! I beg of you to listen!
(MARGARET *exits* L.) I—I love you! Dearest!

IRENE. (*Off stage at R.*) Coming! (*Enter IRENE at R.*)

GERALD. Oh—ah! Oh, Ted isn't here.

IRENE. Yes, but you just called me dearest, didn't you?

GERALD. Ah—ah—ah!

IRENE. I know you did, and do you know what I'm willing to do?

GERALD. Ah—what?

IRENE. I'm willing to break my engagement with Ted for your sake—to reform you. That is my life's ambition—to reform you.

GERALD. Ah, don't—don't! (*Jumps around.*) Remember I'm bad—I'm dangerous. You'd better leave me alone.

IRENE. Oh, no, Gerald, I can't leave you alone. I'll give up my life to reform you—provided we are engaged tomorrow.

GERALD. Ah—ah! I feel one of my tempers coming on. (*Jumps around.*) Ah—ah! Look out! I'm a human fiend! I may kill you! (*Enter TED L. GERALD charges IRENE, who runs to TED.*)

IRENE. Oh!

TED. Ah, ah! You leave my darling alone! I had to break away from Alice to get back here. (*GERALD charges TED and IRENE. TED waves GERALD back.*) Go back! Stand back there, you brute! (*To IRENE*) Never fear, dear, I will protect you. But don't ever let yourself get alone with Gerald. Remember, dear.

IRENE. Yes, dear, I will. (*IRENE and TED kiss. Enter ALICE L. Orchestra plays softly "I Used to Love You, But it's All Over Now."*)

ALICE. Oh! Oh! (*Cries.*) It's true! It's true! He is false. Oh, oh!

GERALD. (*Tries to console ALICE*) Alice—it's—

36 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

it's a scheme. Shh! He's really making love to Irene for your sake.

ALICE. (*Cries*) Oh, oh, oh! By saying that, you're only adding insult to injury. Oh, oh, oh! I want to die!

(*Enter MRS. CHADWICK and GLORIA R.*)

GLORIA. Oh, what is it, Alice?

MRS. CHADWICK. Really, you shouldn't cry like that—you get your nose all red.

ALICE. Oh, oh, oh! I want to die. (*Points to TED.*) He isn't true.

TED. (*Jumps*) Alice darling, I——

IRENE. What?

GLORIA. What?

TED. I—ah——

ALICE. Bo—ho—ho!

(*MRS. CHADWICK motions GLORIA over toward GERALD. GLORIA goes toward GERALD, who jumps and rushes to IRENE.*)

GERALD. Come, Irene, I must play a game of ping pong with you at once. (*GERALD and IRENE leave at L.*)

MRS. CHADWICK. (*To ALICE*) There, there, my dear! I am beginning to understand. It is because Theodore has been paying attention to you—perhaps you were even engaged.

ALICE. (*Cries*) Y—yes—th—that's just it. I—I used to love him, but it's all over now.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, no, my dear, I wouldn't say that. I've been talking to Gloria since it happened this morning, and I'm sure that it was just an impulse—that neither really loves the other, and that Theodore will return to you.

ALICE. (*Looks up*) You were talking it over

with Gloria? Why, what has she got to do with it?

MRS. CHADWICK. Well, of course you know that he proposed to Gloria this morning. (TED *much bus.*)

ALICE. What! (*Cries.*) What! Oh, oh! He's in love with Gloria too! Oh! Oh! Oh! The wicked beast! I hate him! I hate him! I hate him! (*Rushes L.*)

TED. Alice!

ALICE. I want to die! (*Exits L. Orchestra stops playing.*)

TED. (*To MRS. CHADWICK*) Now see what you've done! Ah, ah!

MRS. CHADWICK. Now see what you've done! You've been slandering the good and innocent Gerald before my daughter, merely to get your selfish ends accomplished—to get Gloria yourself! I can see through it clearly. But your scheme is spoiled. I tell you, Gerald practically proposed to Gloria this morning, and you may be sure that they will both live up to the agreement, or I'll know the reason why!

TED. Ah! Ah! Gerald isn't engaged to Gloria. At least I don't think he knows about it if he is.

MRS. CHADWICK. Well, if I know about it, that's all that's necessary. Gloria, I don't want to see you in company with Ted at all. I don't care even if he has turned Alice down for you.

TED. (*Gasps*) Turned Alice down for Gloria?

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes.

TED. Oh—ye gods!

(*Enter AUNT at R.*)

AUNT. (*Fans herself*) Oh, here you are, Gertrude.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Beams*) Oh, Agnes, I was just wondering where you were.

38 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

AUNT. (*To GLORIA*) Do you know what's become of my nephew, Gloria?

GLORIA. No.

AUNT. (*Fans herself*) Strange! I've never seen Gerald so reticent about mingling with young people as he has been these last few days.

TED. Oh, he'll get over that as soon as he becomes a man. (*AUNT and MRS. CHADWICK look icily at TED.*)

AUNT. Oh, Gertrude, I want to show you the beautiful flowers in my garden. (*Laughs.*) Er—(*To GLORIA*)—some of them would make a beautiful bridal bouquet, Gloria, my dear. And I think Gerald simply loves garden flowers.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, yes, we must see them. As the old saying goes, Gloria, you know—er—er—“Violets are red, roses are blue—and so are you.” (*Laughs embarrassedly.*)

AUNT. Come, Theodore. (*ALL leave L. Enter MARGARET at R.—she walks sadly across stage. Enter GERALD R., who runs and catches up with her. He catches MARGARET'S hand and drops on knees.*)

GERALD. Margaret—please let me explain.

MARGARET. Oh! (*Tries to get away.*)

GERALD. Margaret, I swear to you I—I'm all right. It's—it's all—a scheme on other people's part! I swear to you I'm not bad! (*She tries to get away.*) Margaret! Don't try to get away. If it was anyone else I wouldn't care what they thought of me. But you—I must have you understand. (*He gets up.*) I—I can't have you think bad of me because—because—shall I say it, Margaret? (*MARGARET hesitates.*) Because I love you, Margaret! (*Orchestra starts “Love Nest.”*)

MARGARET. Oh, Gerald!

GERALD. I do! (*Goes near MARGARET.*) And what's more—I believe you love me. (*MARGARET*

droops head.) You do! You do! Say you love me, Margaret! (*Holds out arms.*)

MARGARET. Gerald, I—I—I don't know. (*Testily*) But what about your ten million?

GERALD. (*Laughs*) The ten million? Bah! (*Gestures.*) I don't care a snap for that compared to you. If you say the word, Margaret, I'll show you how much I think of that ten million compared to you.

MARGARET. What?

GERALD. Indeed I will. What is all the money in the world compared to you? I wouldn't care if it were fifty million—if you'll only say yes, Margaret, I'll be engaged publicly to you from this minute—and let you get the ten million. Will you believe that I love you now?

MARGARET. Do you mean that?

GERALD. Yes, I do.

MARGARET. You're willing to let the ten million go—for my sake?

GERALD. Yes, dear.

MARGARET. (*Puts hand on GERALD'S shoulder*) Then I'll say it, Gerald. I love you.

GERALD. (*Tries to embrace her*) Margaret!

MARGARET. (*Stops him*) But I don't want your ten million, dear. You can keep that. All I want—is you!

GERALD. (*Kisses her*) Dearest! You can have both!

MARGARET. No, keep your ten million, dear. On that account I refuse to become engaged to you before tomorrow.

GERALD. (*Holds MARGARET off at arm's length, looks at her, then embraces her and kisses her.*) Margaret! You're a brick!

MARGARET. And so are you, Gerald.

GERALD. I know it, dear.

40 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

MARGARET. Those things Ted said about your being false were all untrue, weren't they, dear?

GERALD. Absolutely, dearest. (*Kisses her.*) He said them so as to—well, I'll explain to you tomorrow, dear, when all the trouble will be over.

MARGARET. All right, dear. I'll wait until you're ready to explain.

GERALD. That's lovely of you. All his talk about my making love to other girls and so forth is pure fiction.

MARGARET. I believe you, dear. (*Kisses GERALD.* *Noise at L.* MARGARET *springs out of GERALD's arms.*)

(*Enter AUNT, GLORIA and MRS. CHADWICK at L.* AUNT and MRS. CHADWICK *nod encouragingly to GLORIA, who goes up and kisses GERALD.* GERALD *gasps.*)

AUNT. That's all right, Gerald. (*Goes to GERALD.*) I congratulate you. Gloria has told us about your lovely engagement to Gloria this morning. (*MARGARET begins to cry.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *Same as Act I. Afternoon of same day.*

DISCOVERED: GERALD and TED seated on sofa, in despair, with heads buried in hands. Both look at each other.

TED. Alice won't listen to me.

GERALD. And Margaret won't even speak.

TED. Tell me what you did about Gloria.

GERALD. What could I do? I had to publicly announce before them all that there was a mistake—that Gloria and I were *not* engaged.

TED. And it didn't do any good?

GERALD. I should say not. It did a lot of harm. It made all the girls do nothing but gossip and spread stories around, it made Auntie threaten to send me home, Gloria more determined than ever to get me, and now her mother threatens to sue me for breach of promise—if I don't call myself engaged.

TED. You're no worse off than I am with Alice. Alice positively refuses to look at me.

GERALD. Where are the rest of those girls now?

TED. All of them except Alice and Margaret are over at the country club. It's lucky Myrtle and Irene didn't each want me to take 'em. I don't know what I'm going to do tomorrow about the races. Each girl is expecting me to take her. (*Telephone rings.*) You answer it.

GERALD. No, you answer it. I don't want to hear any more bad news. (*'Phone rings again.*)

TED. Well, I suppose I must. (*At 'phone*) Hello? This is Mr. Bradley speaking. Oh, is this you, Myrtle? Where are you? Oh, out at the club. No, I hardly dare guess what made you call me up. Oh!—(*Jumps*)—our—er—engagement? Oh, ah, oh, yes, I'm very glad, Myrtle. Listen, Myrtle dear, don't you think it would be wiser for us—er—not to announce it just yet? You don't? Oh, no, it isn't that I don't love you, Myrtle dear, but I'll tell you why. You see—er—why—er—don't you see, dear, we better not announce it, dear, because if we did, then—(*Laughs*)—everybody would know about it, wouldn't they, dear? Yes, that's the reason. You may not see the reason now, dear, but you will later. (*Jumps.*) Oh, what about the races? (*Bus.*) Oh—ah, Myrtle dear, do you know I—I think I had better not take you to them? Because I am positively afraid. Of—of horses. Oh, yes. You see, when I was a little boy, a horse—er—a horse—er—chased me all over town, and—er—nearly bit my leg off, and since then I've been positively afraid of them. Oh, but that's just it, dear. I don't know when they might start to bite me again. Well, really, my dear, I assure you that I wouldn't have a particle of enjoyment by taking you to the races. That's very kind of you, dear. And—er—Myrtle dear, remember we must keep our engagement a very great secret. Yes, Myrtle, we must never let anyone know about it. Oh—ah! I didn't mean never, of course. I meant—you know what I meant, don't you, Irene, dear? (*GERALD and TED jump.*) Ah—I meant Myrtle. Oh, no, no! It was purely a mistake. I have no use for Irene whatever. Why did I call you Irene? Well, I must have been thinking about something else—I was thinking of another little incident that happened this morning. Yes, I agree with you. I would like nothing better than never to have to see or speak to Irene again in my life. (*Jumps.*) Oh,

no, dear. Don't tell her. Er—ah—I beg you not to. Er—we—there isn't much more for us to talk about, is there, dear—so we'll have to say good—— What's that, dear? You say you could still talk for half an hour? Oh, no, I'm not disappointed, but really I have several engagements hanging over me that interfere with my talking to you as much as I'd like to, dear. What's that, dear? Oh, yes, dear. You can't imagine my feelings at the thought of hanging up. Yes. Yes. Yes. Good-bye, dear. (*Hangs up. Takes deep breath.*)

GERALD. Well?

TED. (*Wipes brow. Bus.*) Gerald, I never realized how perfectly terrible it is to be popular. Another 'phone talk like that would kill me. (*Telephone rings. Both jump.*) Answer it!

GERALD. Nothing doing.

TED. Well, I don't want to. (*'Phone rings.*)

GERALD. Answer it. It may be important.

TED. That's just it. I don't want anything more that's important. (*'Phone rings.*)

GERALD. Answer it, Ted.

TED. (*At 'phone*) Oh, hello! This is the Dudley residence. (*Jumps.*) You say this is Miss Irene, and you would like to speak to Mr. Ted Bradley? No, Mr. Bradley is not here. Where is he? Er—he has—er—gone out ballooning for the afternoon. When will he be back? Really, I doubt if he'll ever get back. Sometimes he stays up for weeks at a time. (*Jumps.*) Oh—ah—ah! Oh—ah—ah! You knew it was me all the time? (*Laughs mournfully.*) Oh, yes, Irene, I'm so very happy to have you call me up. Yes, you ought to see how happy I look! Then you'd realize how much I love you. That's very sweet of you. Oh—ah—you—er—you think we'd better announce our engagement? I think we had better keep it a secret. Why? Oh, because then it's much more private than when it's announced,

isn't it? Yes, and so I know you'll want to keep it secret. (*Jumps.*) You don't? Well, I think it would be better for me to keep it secret—very much better. Why? Because—because—er—you know how dangerously Gerald acted toward you this morning? Yes, well, you see, if we announced our engagement, Gerald—er—being a dangerous character—er—you see, would prevent our announcing it. It's not clear? I don't think you'd want it much clearer, my dear. I can't explain. Someone might be listening, and the less I say now the better. I think I've said much too much already. What's that? No, no, not to you—too much to Gerald. Yes, yes, he's getting worse all the time. Too bad—I'm sorry for any girl that he wants to marry. Going violently insane, I'm afraid. Yes, only a short time ago he actually bit off one of his own ears. Yes, yes, sad case. Yes, and the worst of it is that when he gets in trouble he always drags me down with him. You'll try to comfort me? Yes, Irene, you don't realize what kind of a comfort you are to me. Yes, I know, dear, it was fortunate that I happened to be there when he attacked you. What was that, Myrtle—(*TED and GERALD jump*)—Irene, dear, Irene! Oh, no, I didn't say Myrtle dear. I said Irene, but this telephone service is so bad they actually give you the wrong sounds. No, dear, I hate Myrtle. You do, too? I wish I'd never see her again. (*Jumps.*) Oh, no, don't tell her. It—it would be a social blunder on my part to have her know. Yes, keep it a secret. That's dear of you, Myrtle. (*Jumps.*) Oh, I mean Irene—there goes that bad telephone again. I'm going to ask central to give us better service. I never heard of words getting twisted so badly in a telephone. You didn't know that they ever got twisted? Oh, yes, they do. You see, the wires get crossed. Especially on days like this. The atmosphere does it. It's very

tense today. Yes, dear. Well, dearie, I'm very glad you called up. But I suppose you're tired of talking to me. What? You usually talk for two hours? Oh, no, no, dear—I'd be willing to talk steadily to you for the next twenty-four hours, provided that that was all that would happen during that time. Oh, the races? Oh, I can't take you to them. Why? Because Gerald is such a dangerous character. No, I'll have to stay and watch him. He might bite off his other ear. Yes, it's too bad I can't take you. I do feel very bad about the races—you can't realize how much. I almost wish there were no races. Well, Myrtle—oh, I mean Irene—after this I'm going to call you dearest. The wires don't get crossed on dearest. Well, dearest, don't you think we'd better stop talking? Well, you see, the papers said we were likely to have a thunder shower this afternoon, and you never can tell where the lightning will strike. It doesn't look like rain? No? It isn't even cloudy? Well, you know a bolt of lightning might strike the wires from a clear sky. That's what's happened to me. Yes, I think we'd better. Yes, dear. Good-bye. Good-bye, dear. Yes, dear, good-bye. Good-bye, dear. (*Hangs up.*) Gerald! I'm ruined! I positively don't know what I'm going to do for the next twenty-four hours. How can I keep each girl from knowing that I'm engaged to all the others? And Alice—I'd rather be dead than lose her. Look here—you got me in this mess, and you've got to help me out.

GERALD. Well, the only gentlemanly thing that you can do is to die.

TED. Yes, that would be a happy solution. But it would be very unpleasant for me.

GERALD. Why don't you pretend you're dead? Pretend you've been killed while trying to do a heroic deed. That would clear yourself from the other girls and reconcile you with Alice.

46 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

TED. Do you think I could get away with it?

GERALD. Sure. If you've got the nerve, you can get away with murder.

TED. I'll do it! Look me over. I'm a corpse.

GERALD. How did your death occur?

TED. Don't ask me.

GERALD. Let me see. What's a good way for you to die, to make a hit with the ladies? Shot dead in a poker game?

TED. No, indeed. Shot while rescuing a little girl from kidnappers, with the mother near by, bound and gagged. That's a good way to die.

GERALD. Very well. How old was the girl?

TED. Under seven, sure. I don't want them to think I was engaged to her.

GERALD. Very well, then. Now how did I learn of your death?

TED. By telegram, of course. Don't you remember? The little girl's mother sent you a telegram telling the sad details of my heroic death.

GERALD. Oh, yes. How you were driven to despair by Alice's turning you down, and how you walked into a deserted saloon——

TED. Gully would sound better.

GERALD. (*Grandiloquently*) Yes, and there saw a desperate villain carrying off a sweet little child by name of—Alice.

TED. (*Grandiloquently*) Yes, and when I heard her name was Alice, I cried, Alice, Alice, for the sake of my true love Alice I will save you!

GERALD. Yes, and then you went down into the gully, with the child's mother looking helplessly on, and fought the desperate villain barehanded.

TED. Yes, and was wounded fatally.

GERALD. Yes, but saved the child! Then you staggered up the bank, reeling like a drunken man, carrying precious little Alice in your vest pocket!

TED. Yes, and stumbled and fell at the mother's feet.

GERALD. And clutched the six inch bullet hole in your breast with both hands as the mother leaned over you with tears of gratitude in her eyes and asked you——

TED. Whether I would prefer roses or violets.

GERALD. No. She—she asked you if there was any message you would care to send your loved ones before—before you went to a warmer climate.

TED. Oh, yes, and what did I say?

GERALD. You said yes! I had a sweetheart! She was taken away from me without my deserving it! Someone slandered me—said that I actually proposed to another girl—but that it's all false.

TED. What?

GERALD. Yes, I didn't propose to one girl—I proposed to three.

TED. See here——

GERALD. Yes, but it was for the sake of showing my true love to Alice! And just because I did that, she turned me down! (*Shows deep emotion.*)

TED. You needn't rub it in.

GERALD. (*Normal tone*) No, we won't have you say that—in the telegram. We'll have the mother say that you gasped out as you lay there on the pea green grass, dying it red—(*Dramatically*)—Yes, yes, madam—there is a message I would like you to deliver. There is a girl—there is a girl—who is all the world to me. She used to be my sweetheart, but now she thinks I'm false. But I'm not! She was misinformed—it is all easily explainable—only—only—I haven't the breath left to explain it. I—I—did love her—and I was hoping that somehow I might show her I did. But now—(*Gasps*)—it's all gone. I—I will die, without seeing her. Please, madam, tell her that I loved her—that it was all false about

48 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

my caring for anyone else—that I did it as a joke! Will you tell her this, madam?

TED. Then she said, Yes, I will, but whom shall I tell?

GERALD. And then you gasped—Oh, tell it to my old pal, Mr. Gerald Donaldson. He is trustworthy—he is worthy—he is noble hearted and handsome——

TED. With no brains at all.

GERALD. And he will deliver my message to Alice.

TED. Good, fine. That ought to work. How soon would you advise me to die?

GERALD. The sooner the better.

TED. Huh?

GERALD. So as to get Alice back again. She'll like you better when you are dead.

TED. She might love me, thinking I died for her. But how'll I let her know that I'm not dead, that I'm living?

GERALD. Easiest thing in the world. Just come around and show yourself alive. And even if she won't believe another thing you say, she'll believe you're alive, all right.

TED. Doubtlessly. But what I want is to get reconciled, and I don't see how I can after I pretend I'm dead.

GERALD. Very well, then, I know another thing you can do. Why not save her from a burglar?

TED. No, I'm not good at subduing burglars.

GERALD. Oh, hire one.

TED. What?

GERALD. Surely. Pay him to rob the house.

TED. What? Oh, I see. You mean hire someone to pretend he's a burglar, and then do the rescuing hero stunt and save Alice. Fine, Gerald, fine! (*He slaps GERALD on back.*) You show real brains at times.

GERALD. (*Registers*) Thank you. I know who we can get for the burglar.

TED. Who? Yourself?

GERALD. Hardly. Get Corey—he's my aunt's gardener.

TED. He might do. Only you'd have to tell him to come armed with a gun instead of a pitchfork, and to tie his red bandana handkerchief around his eyes instead of his neck.

GERALD. We can fix that all right. I'll call Corey on the 'phone right now and order him to report here.

TED. In here?

GERALD. Yes.

TED. (*Laughs*) Your aunt would have a fit if she saw you entertaining him in the parlor.

GERALD. Yes, but she won't see him. (*Goes to 'phone.*) Hello, hello, hello—is this you, Central? What's that? Do I want to make a 'phone call? Why, certainly. What did you think I wanted to do?—Take singing lessons? Give me 246, party J. 246, party J. Party J. J. No, J. H, I, J, you know, the tenth letter of the alphabet. The alphabet. A-l-p-h-a-b-e-t. Yes, tenth letter. Thank you. (*To TED*) These operators ought to get a medal.

TED. You mean ear-trumpet.

GERALD. Yes. Hello, hello, is this 246 party J.? What? 1904 W.? No, no, it's the wrong number. Hello central, hello central. Give me 246, party J. And get it right this time. What? (*Registers. To TED*) Say, did you ever hear anything like the way she called me down? Hello, hello, who's this? Information? I don't want information—I want 246, party J. Yes, 246, party J. Hello—hello—this line is busy, please. Yes, 246, party J. 246, party J. Wait a minute—I'll get some paper and mail it to you.

TED. Don't send it by mail if you want her to get it.

GERALD. Hello, hello. Is this 246, party J? Oh, is this you, Corey? Well, Corey, this is Mr. Donaldson. I—er—have a little job for you that ought to pay you handsomely. Yes, handsomely. Handsomely. Come right over now—I'm in the parlor and will see you here. You're coming right away? Good. Good-bye. (*Hangs up. Looks at watch.*) Well, it took me less than ten minutes to get that call through. The service is improving.

TED. I don't know about your meeting Corey here. You know what your aunt would say.

GERALD. Oh, that's all right. She won't see him. They're all out at the country club.

TED. Yes, but Mrs. Chadwick always comes back early.

GERALD. Well, Mrs. Chadwick's not my aunt, is she? If she should come in—oh, we could pass Corey off to her as a retired banker on a hunting trip. She'd never know the difference.

TED. Mrs. Chadwick surely can make misquotations. The other day she was talking to her doctor, and instead of saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away," she said to him, "An apple a day keeps the donkey away."

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Ha, ha! I bet he was ripping.

TED. No, he said he had to be polite, even if she did make a jackass out of him.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Here's the scheme as far as we've gone. We'll teach Corey how to act as a burglar, and we'll guarantee no harm will come to him on this account.

TED. Provided he doesn't use the education later.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Yes. We'll get him to break into this room tonight, and begin to rifle Auntie's silverware. She keeps it in that drawer. (*Points*

to drawer.) Now, since the girls' sleeping room is right across the hall there—(*Points R.*)—I'll tell him to go in the hall and chase the girls out of bed. Auntie and the older ladies sleep upstairs, away on the other side of the house, and they won't hear a thing. Besides, Mrs. Chadwick snores so loud she would drown out a whole regiment of burglars.

TED. Yes, have him get the girls up by pretending to hunt for their jewels. Then we'll have him be especially rough to Alice—maybe bind and gag her—

GERALD. Oh, say!

TED. What?

GERALD. Have him bind and gag all the girls—so they can't speak. I want to go and propose to them and have the pleasure of being sure they won't answer.

TED. No, but they could nod their heads.

GERALD. Right. I don't dare try it.

TED. Well, as I was saying, then it would be up to me to come on the scene and pretend to drive the burglar off and rescue Alice.

GERALD. But don't forget to make up with Alice before the burglar leaves.

TED. Why?

GERALD. You're surer of getting her then.

TED. Oh, don't worry about that. All I need is a chance to talk to her, where she has to listen. Nobody can withstand me then.

GERALD. I'd like to see you talk to mother's cook.

TED. I was talking about ladies. A cook isn't a lady.

GERALD. No?

TED. No. A lady is a gentlewoman, but a cook is no gentle woman. Therefore a cook isn't a lady.

GERALD. Oh, I see! (*Laughs.*) Well, you want me to come along tonight and see you rescue Alice, don't you?

52 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

TED. Sure. I suppose you'll come along dressed in your sport colored bathrobe.

GERALD. (*Seriously*) Yes.

TED. Well, don't show yourself in front of the burglar.

GERALD. Why not?

TED (*Laughs*) The color of that bathrobe alone would be enough to drive off any burglar.

GERALD. Young man, don't make fun of that bathrobe. I tell you, it is really very pretty. Only you don't appreciate its color scheme.

TED. Pooh! pooh!

(*Enter COREY R., wearing disreputable and enormous boots, also shabby clothes.*)

GERALD. Oh, hello, Corey.

COREY. 'Ow do ye do, sir? Surely the likes hof me his 'adrly fit to be hin the missus' best room, sir.

GERALD. Oh, that's all right, Corey. If anybody comes, you're to pretend you're a retired banker.

COREY. Ha retired w'at, sir?

TED. A retired banker—out in the country on a hunting trip.

COREY. Sure hand hit's ha poor un youse chosen for ha pretense, sir. Has me wife used to say, sir, that w'enhever Hi tried to make ha pretense, sir, that Hi made more hof ha jackhass hout hof meself than hever, sir.

GERALD. Corey, have you ever pretended to be a burglar?

COREY. (*Jumps*) What, sir? Ho, no, sir. Hi 'ave no hincinations hin that direction, sir. (*Confused.*) Hi've never taken hangthink, sir. Never, sir. Hexcept, sir, Hi might 'ave been hat your cigars once hor twice, sir.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) You've handed yourself a dead giveaway. But that's not what you're here for.

COREY. No, sir? Hi'm glad hof that, sir.

GERALD. No, what we want you to do is very simple.

TED. Yes, just dress up as a burglar and break into the house.

COREY. W'at, sir! Sure, hand you doesn't mean hit, sir? That's somethink Hise never done in me life, sir. Hi 'ad han huncle that used to be werry good hat that sort hof think. But hit 'u'd be 'ard to get 'im hout, sir.

GERALD. Oh, you'll do all right. We'll protect you from harm. All you have to do is make a little noise and get the young ladies out of bed.

COREY. Har the ladies hexpectin' me, sir? (GERALD and TED laugh.)

TED. No, I hardly think so.

GERALD. But even if you're unexpected, we'll see that you get a warm reception.

COREY. Ho, sir, but Hi t'inks you 'ad better get somebody helse, sir. Hi'm no 'and hat getting ladies hout hof bed, sir.

GERALD. Oh, no, it'll be all right, Corey. And do you know what I'll give you if you do it? If all goes well, I'll give you one hundred dollars.

COREY. Ho, sir, ho, sir, that's werry generous, sir. Hi would halmost do hit, sir, hexcept that Hi was once ha married man, sir.

TED. Well, I'd advise you to go ahead and do it—just for your wife's sake.

COREY. Hi can't see as 'ow breakin' hinto hanother ladies' hapartments could be hexactly called somethink done for my wife's sake, sir.

GERALD. Oh, think of the monev—the good the money will do your wife. Why, for his future wife's sake, Ted himself has taken a much greater risk than that.

TED. I should say so.

COREY. 'E 'as, sir? (To TED) Now, hif you

54 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

will pardon me sayin' hit, sir, but you's must be ha werry brave man, sir. Hespically hif your lady can 'andle ha broomstick like mine could, sir.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) He can tell you more about that later. But the question is, will you do it, Corev? Think of the nice present you can buy your wife with the money.

COREY. Ho, yes, sir; hit's werry nice hof you to talk like that, sir, but Hi 'ardly t'ink Hi could buy hanythink that would be happreciated by me wife, sir.

GERALD. Oh, yes, you could. They're lots of things you could buy.

TED. Yes, one hundred dollars ought to pay for the first installment on a new hat.

COREY. Ho, ho, sirs. She doesn't care habout 'ats hany more, sir. Hat least Hi t'ink she doesn't.

GERALD and TED. What?

TED. Corey, you've married the ideal wife!

COREY. Ho, no, sirs; yous don't hunderstand, sirs.

TED. What? Why doesn't she care for hats?

COREY. She's been dead foive years, sir.

GERALD and TED. Oh!

TED. (*Shakes hands*) Congrat—— I mean condolences.

COREY. Yes, sir, Hi haccept both, sir.

GERALD. Well, will you do the job?

COREY. Hif Hi do, Hi ham to get one 'undred dollars?

GERALD. Yes, provided I'm worth that much tomorrow.

COREY. Hi'll do hit, sir. Han 'onest man doesn't halways get the hoportunity to make one 'undred dollars by bein' ha burglar, sir.

GERALD. All right, Corey. I'll tell you what to do. First, you dress up as a burglar. Do you know what burglars wear?

COREY. Yes, sir. Hi've seen them hin the movies, sir.

GERALD. Well, you dress up as an up-to-date burglar, with all extras, including a gun and a dark lantern. Have you a dark lantern, Corey?

COREY. Yes, sir, Hi's got w'at you would call ha dark lantern, sir, because hit's always a-goin' hout, sir.

GERALD. No, that isn't what I mean. (*Takes flashlight from table, lights it and gives it to COREY.*) Here, use this.

COREY. Hall right, sir. (*Flashlight is still lit.*)

GERALD. And—er—(*Looks at COREY's boots*)—I'd put on a lighter pair of dancing slippers.

COREY. Ho, do yous want me to dance with the ladies, sir? (*GERALD and TED laugh.*)

GERALD. No.

TED. (*Sees flashlight still lit*) Say, put out that light!

COREY. (*Embarrassedly jumps and blows at bulb. Don't overdo. GERALD immediately unsnaps button as COREY is about to do the same.*) Ho, hexcuse me, sir.

GERALD. Now listen. You come into this room here, and ransack all the drawers. Auntie's silver is in that drawer there. Then go out in the hall—(*Points R.*)—and wake up all the young ladies.

COREY. Yes, sir.

TED. Do you know where the young ladies sleep?

COREY. Well, to be frank, sir, seein' has 'ow Hi 'ave been—er—er—a-waterin' the garden werry late hat night, sir, Hi t'inks Hi 'as their room pretty well located, sir. (*GERALD and TED laugh.*)

GERALD. I bet you have.

TED. Well, you go into the young ladies' room—don't disturb the older ladies upstairs at all——

COREY. Hindeed Hi won't, sir.

TED. And demand all their valuables. Get all the

girls to come in here, and be especially rough to Miss Alice.

GERALD. Do you know which one is Miss Alice?

COREY. Hi know 'er werry well hin daytime, sir, hand providin' she doesn't wear too many hextras as come hof hat night time, sir, w'y Hi——

TED. Oh, she doesn't. She's a real girl. She doesn't wear a single false thing. (GERALD *laughs and raps on wood.*)

GERALD. I bet you're wrong. They all do—— (Seriously)—except—except Margaret.

TED. (*Laughs and raps on wood*) Knock on wood.

GERALD. Well, to go on, Corey. You make a big show of collecting jewels and treat Miss Alice specially rough, and then Ted is to come in and frighten you off.

COREY. But will hit be certain as the police won't hinterfere, sir?

TED. Absolutely. The whole thing should take less than twenty minutes, and who ever heard of the police getting to the scene of a burglary until several hours after the thief had left?

COREY. Well, hif you gentlemen makes sure as Hi ham to be hamply protected, sir, Hi'll go ha'ead hand do hit, sirs.

GERALD and TED. Oh, yes, yes; you'll be perfectly safe.

TED. It's I who am taking the real chance.

COREY. 'Ows that, sir?

TED. Er—never mind.

COREY. Werry well, sir. Now Hi's to treat Miss Halice hespecially rough, sir?

TED. Yes.

COREY. Hi supposes you wants me to do some-think special to 'er.

TED. Yes.

COREY. Such has tryin' to kiss 'er, sir?

TED. (*Jumps*) No!

COREY. Ho, hexcuse me, sir. No hoffense, sir. Hi t'inks Hi'm beginning to see somethink, sir.

TED. What do you mean?

COREY. (*Slyly*) Hi 'ad to practice ha little deception like this to land my own wife, sir. But Hi's always regretted hit, sir.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Possibly Ted will later, too.

TED. No! Not with Alice! With any other girl but Alice, yes. But Alice is different—there's never been any girl like Alice.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Pooh! pooh!

TED. Well, you're just as bad about Margaret.

GERALD. (*Seriously*) Well, Margaret *is* different. But you only think Alice is.

TED. (*Laughs*) Sour grapes. It's the other way around, isn't it, Corey?

GERALD. No, it's Margaret that's different, isn't it, Corey?

TED. No, it's Alice.

COREY. Pardon me, sir, but hif you's wants me to settle hit, sir——

GERALD *and* TED. Yes.

COREY. W'y, you's both wrong, sirs.

GERALD. What!

COREY. Pardon me, sirs, but Hi'm han older man, sirs. Hi's 'ad hexperihence.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Well, that comes later, of course. Now, one thing more about this scheme. You understand you are to keep absolutely quiet about it?

COREY. Hi t'inks yous don't 'ave to tell me that, sir. Hi value my life too 'ighly to tell hanyone habout hit, sir.

TED. Hey! Here's Mrs. Chadwick!

GERALD. Corey! Pretend you're Mr. Haber, my old banking friend. (*Grasps COREY's hand. Enter MRS. CHADWICK L.*) Well, well, I surely am glad to see my old banking friend, Mr. Haber! Oh, how

58 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

do you do, Mrs. Chadwick! Allow me to introduce you to Mr. Haber, president of the—er—People's National Bank—er—who has just returned from a rough and tumble hunting trip.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Shakes hands graciously*) Charmed, I'm sure, to meet you.

COREY. 'Ow do ye do, marm?

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Surprised*) Ah!

GERALD. (*Slaps COREY on back*) That's a pleasant little surprise he has for us all. (*To COREY*) You have spent a great deal of time in learning the Cockney accent, haven't you, Mr. Haber?

COREY. Yes, sir. To put hit correctly, Hi's been a-learnin' the Cockney haccent hever since Hi wus knee high to ha grass'opper, marm. (*GERALD and TED laugh forcedly.*)

MRS. CHADWICK. Why, I wish to congratulate you on your excellent accent. (*Laughs.*)

TED. (*To COREY*) To hear you talk, one would never imagine that you were a bank president, would one?

COREY. No, sir, hand least hof hall myself, sir.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Laughs*) Well, you surely can speak the accent perfectly. You must consider it a very valuable accomplishment.

COREY. Hon the contrary, marm, Hi 'u'd give hanythink to get rid hof hit.

MRS. CHADWICK. What?

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Oh, he's only joking, of course, Mrs. Chadwick.

COREY. (*Laughs*) Yes, yes. Hi wus honly jokin', hof course. Ha, ha! Hit's werry seldom as Hi's been credited with enough brains for ha joke. Ha, ha! Hi's Henglish born hall right. Ha, ha!

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, are you an Englishman, Mr. Haber?

COREY. Ho, yes, marm. Hi wus honly a little fellow w'en Hi came hacross to this country.

MRS. CHADWICK. You don't say so! And I suppose you've been back with your family to visit the ancestral home?

COREY. (*Laughs*) Well, marm, Hi's often wanted to go back afore the missus died.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh!

COREY. Hand hif the missus 'ad been willin' to 'ave gone back hin steerage, Hi would 'ave been able to pay for hit.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh! 'Oh!

GERALD. (*To MRS. CHADWICK*) He's a great joker. Just laugh. (*ALL laugh.*)

COREY. (*Laughs*) But Hi'd never let hon to the missus w'ere hour hancestral 'ome wus, marm.

MRS. CHADWICK. No?

COREY. (*Laughs*) No, hit wus halways either the poor'ouse hor the jail, marm.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh! Oh!

TED. You see, Mrs. Chadwick, that although Mr. Haber himself is a very highly respected and important banker, his early life was severely handicapped. But think how far he's risen above that.

COREY. Yes, has Hi always say w'en Hi'm 'oeing the garden, 'ow proud my father'd be to see me.

MRS. CHADWICK. Hoeing the garden?

TED. (*Laughs*) That's Mr. Haber's favorite pas-time. He's picked it up as a diversion from banking.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, I see.

COREY. (*Laughs*) Yes, hand hit proves ha werry profitable diversion, marm.

MRS. CHADWICK. Indeed?

COREY. Yes. Hin ha few years Hi 'ope to 'ave henough money saved to start ha bank haccount hof me own.

GERALD. (*Laughs*) Ha, ha, ha! What a good joke! President Haver of the People's National Bank just ready to start a bank account! Ha, ha, ha!

COREY. Ho, but we's not so poor has you's may

t'ink, marm. The hold lady 'ad ha neat little sum 'idden haway afore she up and died.

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes, I often hear of bankers' wives having large investments.

COREY. (*Laughs*) Hit's funny, marm, but the honly place she 'u'd hinvest 'er sum wus up' er stocking, marm.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh! (*GERALD and TED laugh.*)

TED. Another joke! Ha, ha, ha!

GERALD. Yes, yes. Ha, ha, ha!

COREY. You sees, marm, she never 'ad no use for banks, marm.

MRS. CHADWICK. What?

TED. Another joke! Ha, ha, ha!

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, Mr. Haber, I will need a banker to look after my property after my death. I wonder if you would be willing to execute my will?

COREY. W'at's that, marm?

MRS. CHADWICK. I wonder if you would be willing to execute my will?

COREY. Who his Will, marm?

MRS. CHADWICK. What?

COREY. Well, marm, Hi'm not much hof ha 'and hat that kind hof business, but hif you wants me to hexecute your Will, w'y Hi'll provide henough rope so you's can 'ang 'im properly.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, oh, oh! How insulting!

TED. Oh—er—ah—he's very absent-minded at times. That's what makes him say those things. Change the subject.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*To TED*) Oh, I see. (*To COREY*) Oh, you are just returning from a hunting trip, Mr. Haber? (*COREY looks blank. GERALD nods and pokes COREY.*)

GERALD. Yes, he has had a most wonderful experience hunting up in the mountains.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, yes, with Indian guides?

TED. Yes.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Does not look at COREY's feet*) Oh, I've heard about them. How they hunt all their game in specially made moccasins that deaden the noise of their footsteps. (GERALD *gets between* MRS. CHADWICK *and* COREY's feet.)

GERALD. Yes, yes.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, do tell us what your game was?

COREY. (*Blankly*) Game, marm?

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes, what is your favorite big game?

COREY. Cricket, marm.

MRS. CHADWICK. Cricket!

COREY. Yes, marm. Hit's the biggest game hin jolly hold Hengland.

MRS. CHADWICK. What! Do you mean to say that English sportsmen hunt crickets?

TED. (*Laughs*) Oh, there's a little misunderstanding, that's all. Mr. Haber is talking about the game of cricket. You don't mean you ever hunted crickets, do you?

COREY. No, sir, Hi 'aven't. But lately hour 'ouse 'as been troubled with cockroaches.

GERALD. Er—he means the servants' quarters.

COREY. Yes, sir; that's where the missus hand Hi used to live.

TED. Just in summer time, while the rest of the house is being repaired.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, I see! (*Laughs. Thinks, as if trying to remember.*) Er—er—when the servants' away, the master will play, as the saying goes. (*Laughs. GERALD and TED register.*)

GERALD. Yes, yes, that's it exactly. For another appropriate quotation, I might say, "In time of peace, prepare for war." (*ALL laugh. COREY moves, exposing his boots to* MRS. CHADWICK, *who shows surprise.*)

62 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

TED. Oh, those boots are the new style Indian moccasin.

COREY. Yes, they's just the think for wet weather hin the garden. Hof course Hi 'ave ha better pair than these, but me dog chewed the hend hoff hof one hof 'em.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh—er—ah! Oh, the pair of Indian moccasins you have on are surely very serviceable.

COREY. Ho, yes, marm. The best t'ing 'bout these wus, the missus could put 'em hon 'erself.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, oh!

GERALD. Just on hunting parties. Ha, ha!

TED. Yes, ha, ha!

COREY. Honly they didn't fit 'er werry good.

MRS. CHADWICK. Ha, ha! Of course not.

COREY. No, they wus too small.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh—ah—oh! (*Laughs.*) Oh, I see you are a great joker, Mr. Haber.

COREY. Yes, marm, hif Hi's hever hout hat ha party w'ere there's one short hin the fun making, the boys hall say that Hi supply the missing link. (*Laughs.*)

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes. Of course it is brains that make the difference between a banker and a common laborer.

COREY. Yes, marm. Hand hif Hi do say hit me-self, hit's ha shame that Hi 'ad so liddle heducation, hor there's no telling but Hi might 'ave made ha banker.

MRS. CHADWICK. What? What? Aren't you a banker?

GERALD. Oh, he doesn't call himself a banker. He is really something better. He is—er—a financier.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, I see.

(*Enter AUNT L. GERALD jumps up and down in*

front of AUNT, keeping AUNT from seeing COREY. TED rushes COREY out at R.)

GERALD. Oh, Auntie, look at the beautiful ceiling! The ceiling! The beautiful ceiling!

AUNT. (*Looks at ceiling*) Why, what is there about that? I don't see anything.

GERALD. No, but a moment ago you would have.

AUNT. Oh, Gerald, Mrs. Chadwick and your Auntie have something very important to discuss. If you will—er—er——

GERALD. Gladly, Auntie. I will gladly "err."
(*Exits R.*)

AUNT. What? Oh, ah! (*To MRS. CHADWICK*) Now, Gertrude, I want to talk to you about Gerald and Gloria. I am determined that they shall announce their engagement before Gerald is twenty-one.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Pats AUNT*) I am very glad to hear you say that, dear. *Very glad.*

AUNT. Yes, and I have no doubt but that Gloria will know how to manage that ten million to her best advantage.

MRS. CHADWICK. No doubt whatever, dear.

AUNT. Now, Gertrude. Er—I must be very frank with you.

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes, Agnes.

AUNT. An urgent need requires urgent measures.

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes, dear. There is a quotation to that effect, but I can't quite recall it.

AUNT. Never mind, Gertrude. Gerald will be twenty-one exactly at midnight. He was born at midnight—and the responsibility of reconciling him to Gloria before that time rests with us.

MRS. CHADWICK. Have you anything to suggest, Agnes?

AUNT. I have indeed. I know how to make a

man fall quickly in love with a girl. It worked beautifully in my own case.

MRS. CHADWICK. What is that, dear?

AUNT. Er—make arrangements for a hired man to pretend to rob the premises. Have him invade this room in the dead of night, and then we will call Gerald and tell him the girls are in danger. In the meantime the girls will be roused from bed.

MRS. CHADWICK. You mean tell him there's a burglar in the house?

AUNT. No, indeed. That might frighten Gerald so he'd run away.

MRS. CHADWICK. Well?

AUNT. Er—tell him the girls are in danger and that he must rush to their assistance. Now, Gerald has a bright-colored—er—er—bathrobe that he wears when he is—er—er—in night attire.

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes.

AUNT. And when Gloria sees him coming, although it will be dark, she can—er—er—distinguish Gerald by the robe.

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes, and Gloria will know what to do. I've trained her well.

AUNT. Yes, and I will—er—instruct the man I hire as the burglar to cringe before Gerald, dressed in the bright-colored bathrobe, and then—if Gloria plays her part well, Gerald should be relieved of all concern about the ten million.

MRS. CHADWICK. Agnes, you're a splendid schemer. Who will you get for the burglar?

AUNT. Some inoffensive person—Corey, my gardener, will do.

MRS. CHADWICK. Do you think he would—er—agree to do it?

AUNT. Well, I will promise him that if he does his work successfully, I shall give him one hundred dollars by this time tomorrow. And if he hesitates, I will threaten to discharge him.

MRS. CHADWICK. I hope he will be agreeable.

AUNT. He will. Most men do as I say, rather than argue with me. I am very proud of it.

MRS. CHADWICK. Er—my dear, there is one thing about which we must be extremely cautious.

AUNT. What is that?

MRS. CHADWICK. Er—it is very evident that Myrtle and Irene are very willing to become engaged to Gerald—before he's twenty-one. Now, do you not think there is danger of their—er—taking advantage of this opportunity we have planned for Gloria—er—for pressing their own claims?

AUNT. That's more than likely. But I know what we can do. We shall tell them frankly that they are not to interfere, and that if they do, we will—er—make their life unbearable and—er—scandalize them out of society.

MRS. CHADWICK. Good. We'll tell them that if we as much as see them alone with Gerald, or his chum, Ted, for that matter, that that is the fate awaiting them.

(Enter GLORIA, MYRTLE and IRENE at L., talking ad lib.)

GLORIA. *(To her mother)* Oh, Mama, we had a wonderful time. Everything was lovely at the club. The only trouble was, Gerald wasn't there.

IRENE. Yes, he told me he was coming. *(GLORIA eyes IRENE.)*

MYRTLE. Yes, I thought he understood I'd meet him there. *(GLORIA and IRENE eye MYRTLE.)*

AUNT. *(Nods to MRS. CHADWICK)* Now, girls, I have a big secret for you!

ALL GIRLS. A secret! Oh, do tell us!

AUNT. *(Smiles, puts finger wisely to lips)* It's about Gloria—and her lover, Gerald. *(IRENE and MYRTLE snort.)* Now, Gerald has become a little

66 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

obstinate lately, and just purely on account of his peculiar temperament, he refuses to press his—er—engagement. But—er—he will. Listen. Tonight, girls, a masked man will break into the house.

ALL GIRLS. Oh, how thrilling!

GLORIA. I bet it's Gerald!

AUNT. No, it isn't. It will be a burglar.

ALL GIRLS. Oh!

AUNT. But he will be perfectly harmless, girls. He will be hired to do as he's told.

ALL GIRLS. Oh!

AUNT. He will collect all the silver and then he will make you get out of bed, to show him your hidden jewel boxes and so forth.

ALL GIRLS. Oh, oh!

MYRTLE. I'm not going to let my hair down tonight.

IRENE. Nor I either!

GLORIA. I think I'll wear my pink silk night-dress.

MRS. CHADWICK. Don't—it won't match well with Gerald's pajamas.

GLORIA. What, Mama?

MRS. CHADWICK. That comes later—you explain, Agnes.

AUNT. While the burglar is thus engaged in rifling your jewels, we will see to it that Gerald is aroused, and he will come rushing in, doubtlessly clad in his bright-colored bathrobe.

ALL GIRLS. Oh! Oh!

AUNT. And I have instructed the burglar to be very frightened at Gerald's appearance, and to run—at the proper moment. (*Smiles at GLORIA.*) And now, Gloria, comes your part. You are to—er—embrace the opportunity—and—er—Gerald, too. Is my meaning clear?

GLORIA. Yes, I think I know what you mean.

IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR 67

AUNT. Very well, and we will—er—er—leave—er—the rest to you.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*To GLORIA*) I'm sure the other girls will be anxious to help. Won't you, dears?

MYRTLE and IRENE. (*Eye each other*) Oh, yes.

MRS. CHADWICK. That's very sweet of you, dears.

AUNT. But let me warn you. If you don't, means will be taken to make you regret your failure to—er—cooperate with Gloria in this matter. I mean that if you don't cooperate there are ways and means by which we can make your present social positions untenable.

MRS. CHADWICK. Yes, girls, we mean it. Gerald is Gloria's by right, and if we as much as see you alone with either Gerald or Theodore, you will have to answer for it.

AUNT. Yes. Is that perfectly clear, girls?

MYRTLE and IRENE. (*Eye each other*) It is.

AUNT. Very well, then, there is just one more thing. While the burglar is in here, you girls are to do exactly as he requests you to do.

ALL GIRLS. We will.

AUNT. Yes, be obliging and help him out. Come, Gertrude, I must attend to the burglar right away. (*Exits R.*)

GLORIA. (*Runs after MRS. CHADWICK*) Oh, Mama, I feel so happy! (*Exits R.*)

MYRTLE. (*Eyes IRENE*) Well, what do you know about that?

IRENE. Huh! I like their nerve! To expect us not only to stand aside, but to help Gloria! I wonder if they don't think we'd like ten million ourselves.

MYRTLE. Irene, I tell you what we'll do! There isn't much chance of our getting Gerald's money for ourselves, but I know what we can do.

IRENE. What? (*Smiles.*)

68 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

MYRTLE. (*Laughs*) See that Gloria and her scheming mother don't get it. We'll spoil their pudding for them.

IRENE. Good! You and I will pull together, Myrtle.

MYRTLE. We will! Now let's make a clean breast of our own plans to each other.

IRENE. All right. I'll start it. Do you know what I did this morning?

MYRTLE. What?

IRENE. But first will you promise never to tell?

MYRTLE. Why, Irene! Of course! You know I never tell a secret.

IRENE. Well, I accepted a proposal.

MYRTLE. You don't say so! Is he good looking?

IRENE. Certainly. Otherwise I wouldn't have accepted.

MYRTLE. Do you love him?

IRENE. I'm not sure. But that doesn't make any difference anyway. He proposed so beautifully I didn't have the heart to refuse him.

MYRTLE. Do you know, I did the same thing this morning, too.

IRENE. What?

MYRTLE. Fact. I'm engaged, too.

IRENE. Oh, Myrtle, you don't mean it! (*They kiss.*) Who's the lucky fellow?

MYRTLE. Ted.

IRENE. *What?*

MYRTLE. What?

IRENE. (*Sniffles*) Oh, oh, oh! Why, I'm engaged to Ted!

MYRTLE. What!

IRENE. (*Crys*) He—he—proposed to me this morning.

MYRTLE. Well, I'll be blowed—oh—excuse me—I—I mean astonished. Come, Irene, there's not a

bit of use crying over it. You said you didn't love him.

IRENE. (*Crys*) N—no, but that's not it.

MYRTLE. Well, what is it?

IRENE. (*Crys*) To—to think that he would propose to you!

MYRTLE. Oh, come, Irene. I'm beginning to get a little light on the subject. Probably Ted proposed to us to help Gerald out.

IRENE. Oh, I bet that's just what it is!

MYRTLE. Surely that's it! And the poor dear thought when we accepted him that we would have to leave Gerald alone. (*Both laugh.*)

IRENE. He can't know girls very well if he thought that.

MYRTLE. No.

(GERALD and TED enter at R., stop, and start to rush out R.)

IRENE and MYRTLE. Oh! Come here!

MYRTLE. We have something very important to tell you!

IRENE. Don't be afraid—we don't want to marry either of you.

TED. (*Jumps*) What?

GERALD. (*Still near door R.*) What is it?

MYRTLE. There's a plot—to get you engaged to Gloria! (GERALD and TED laugh.)

TED. We knew that before.

IRENE. Oh, Teddy—we've guessed why you proposed to both of us this morning.

TED. What! (*Jumps R.*) I'm going!

IRENE. Stop him, Gerald!

MYRTLE. We're not angry. (GERALD catches TED.)

TED. What!

IRENE. We see it all now. Ted just proposed to

70 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

us two girls because he thought Gerald would be safe, didn't you, Ted?

TED. I must admit you're right.

MYRTLE. (*Pats TED on back*) That's all right, Ted, old top! No hard feelings at all.

IRENE. (*To TED*) But if you thought that merely being engaged to another would keep Gerald free—why, you still have a lot to learn about girls. (*TED jumps.*)

MYRTLE. (*To TED*) Yes, I guess you haven't had much experience with girls, have you? (*GERALD laughs.*)

IRENE. Oh, Gerald, listen! (*GERALD jumps and stops laughing immediately.*) Do you know what your aunt and Gloria and her mother have up their sleeve?

GERALD. No, what?

MYRTLE. They're going to hire a burglar to come here tonight, and you're supposed to rescue Gloria and propose to her.

GERALD. (*Bus. with TED*) Did you ever hear the likes of that?

TED. Tell us all about it.

IRENE. Well, your aunt said the burglar was to be a fake, and he was to run as soon as Gloria had fallen in your arms, and you had proposed. (*TED and GERALD look at each other.*)

GERALD. Does my aunt know that I am expecting the burglar?

MYRTLE and IRENE. Oh, no.

IRENE. That's supposed to be a secret.

GERALD. Really? You mean—you mean that this scheme is entirely original on my aunt's part?

MYRTLE. Yes, why?

GERALD. (*Laughs. Business with TED*) Oh, nothing. I was just wondering.

IRENE. And Gloria's mother had the nerve to think that we would help Gloria.

TED. (*Laughs*) Some people have more nerve than brains.

GERALD. Ah—er—do Margaret and Alice—er—know about this?

IRENE. No, none of the girls beside Gloria.

MYRTLE. But we're not going to help Gloria. If you don't want to propose to anyone else before your twenty-first birthday—(GERALD *jumps back*)—we'll make sure that you don't do it to Gloria.

IRENE. Yes, and do you know what your aunt and Mrs. Chadwick said?

GERALD. No, what?

IRENE. That if they as much as caught us two with you two alone, they would drive us out of society. So you see what risks we're running.

GERALD. You two girls are bricks. I could hug both of you.

IRENE. Well, why don't you? (GERALD *jumps*.)

TED. He'd like to, only he's afraid you'd take it as a proposal.

MYRTLE. (*Laughs*) It must be terrible to be popular.

GERALD. Yes, girls, it is terrible. I've had to be a regular hermit because I'm always afraid of that. It's terrible—you don't know how many times I've longed to be able really to hug a girl before I'm twenty-one.

IRENE. Poor Gerald!

GERALD. Ah—er—ah—er—(*Goes to IRENE.*) If I should—ah—er—you wouldn't take it for an engagement?

IRENE. (*Shakes head*) Provided you don't get engaged to Gloria.

GERALD. By George, I will!

ALL. What?

GERALD. Not get engaged to Gloria, but—but—(*Takes IRENE to sofa. IRENE sits on his lap. GERALD takes deep breath.*) My, but this is glorious!

TED. Oh, say—— (*Whispers to MYRTLE.*)

MYRTLE. Well, you wouldn't let me stay out in the cold, would you? (*TED takes MYRTLE to sofa. MYRTLE sits on his lap. GERALD leans over and anxiously whispers to TED, who laughs.*) What is it, Teddie?

TED. (*Laughs*) He wants to know if it would be all right to kiss Irene. My, but he's green!

IRENE. (*Coyly*) What did Gerald want to do?

TED. (*Laughs*) Now you've got to, Gerald.

GERALD. (*To IRENE*) Can I? Really? (*IRENE nods.*) My, but this is fine! (*GERALD kisses IRENE and TED kisses MYRTLE as AUNT and MRS. CHADWICK enter L. GERALD and TED spring up.*)

AUNT and MRS. CHADWICK. Oh! Gerald Donaldson!

CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE: *Same as Act I.*

TIME: *Midnight.*

(At rise of curtain, stage is dark. Enter TOGAN with burglar's equipment.)

TOGAN. Ssst, Slade! Come in. *(Enter SLADE L.)*

SLADE. *(Looks at watch)* Say, it's only half-past eleven. We're foolish ter try ter rob a house so early.

TOGAN. Ah, shh! Talk low. *(TOGAN and SLADE creep cautiously around room, ransacking everything.)*

SLADE. I guess dere ain't notting in here.

TOGAN. *(Opens drawer containing silver)* Hey! Look here!

SLADE. Oh, baby! We nearly missed it! *(They put silver in kit and go R.)*

TOGAN. *(Points R.)* What's out dere?

SLADE. I dunno. Probably de dining-room.

(Stage lights up. Enter GLORIA, MYRTLE and IRENE at R., dressed in negligees.)

TOGAN and SLADE. *(Point guns)* Hands up! *(Girls giggle and raise hands.)*

GLORIA. Oh, hello! We turned the lights on from the hall.

TOGAN. Put 'em out—quick!

GLORIA. Oh, nobody can see us. See, the shades are all down.

IRENE. No, it's perfectly safe to leave the lights on.

TOGAN. W—wh—what?

MYRTLE. Really, have we got to hold our hands up? It's awfully tiresome.

TOGAN and SLADE. Wh—wh—what? (*Look at each other.*)

MYRTLE. Besides, how can we help you find our jewels like this? (TOGAN and SLADE *swallow, bus.*)

IRENE. Come, don't waste time like this. We want to help you as much as we can. (TOGAN and SLADE *jump.*)

GLORIA. Yes, Mama made us promise we'd do anything you say.

TOGAN. (*Hoarsely*) Say, Slade, are real ladies always as polite as dat, or is we in a bug house?

SLADE. I—I don't know what dey means. But keep yer eyes open.

TOGAN. You bet!

SLADE. (*To GIRLS*) See here—keep quiet! (*GIRLS nod.*)

SLADE. (*To TOGAN*) Dey suttently is mighty obliging. (*To GIRLS*) Now don't get scaret—we ain't goin' ter hurt youse.

MYRTLE and IRENE. Why, of course not.

GLORIA. Oh, yes, you are. You want to treat me very roughly. Don't you remember? (TOGAN and SLADE *register.*)

SLADE. Now see here, ladies. We wants you to shell out all yer sparklers—or if ye don't—— (*Taps gun. GIRLS all show jewelry in hands and rush toward SLADE.*)

GLORIA. Why, surely, we have them all ready for you.

MYRTLE. Here's my diamond pendant. (*Puts it in TOGAN's hand.*)

IRENE. And here's my ruby ring. (*Puts it in SLADE's hand.*)

GLORIA. (*Pushing forward*) Do look at my pearl necklace! Isn't it a beauty? (*Tries to put it in SLADE's hand. SLADE jumps back, dropping all jewelry. TOGAN does likewise.*)

GIRLS. Why, what's the matter?

IRENE. They don't think it's necessary to take them. (*Picks up jewelry.*)

GLORIA. Oh, yes, but it is. I want this robbery to be real. (*GIRLS advance on TOGAN and SLADE.*) Here, you must take them. Mama would be angry if you didn't.

IRENE. Here's the jewelry you dropped.

TOGAN. Ah! (*Jumps back.*)

IRENE. Do take it. (*Gives the jewelry to SLADE.*)

MYRTLE. Here are three bracelets. (*Takes bracelets off arm and puts them in TOGAN's hand. MYRTLE goes to stand and gets jewel box.*)

GLORIA. Yes, and here are three more valuable than those. (*MYRTLE registers. GLORIA takes three bracelets off arm and tries to hand them to TOGAN and SLADE, who both refuse. GLORIA puts them in TOGAN's pocket.*)

TOGAN. Hey!

MYRTLE. (*Returns with jewel box*) Here you are. Everything else is in this box. We got it ready this afternoon. (*Holds box up to both TOGAN and SLADE.*)

TOGAN and SLADE. Ah! (*MYRTLE still holds box.*)

IRENE. Oh, yes, and do take this money. (*Offers TOGAN big bankroll.*) I got it out of the bank just on purpose.

TOGAN. Ah—ah—ah! (*Jumps back.*)

IRENE. Oh, don't be so afraid. Do take it. (*Presses roll in TOGAN's hand, who drops it. IRENE*

picks it up, and presses it in his hand carefully. TOGAN swallows and looks at SLADE.)

MYRTLE. Well, it isn't gentlemanly to stand there and not take this jewelry box.

SLADE. See here! Ye can't fool us like dis! I sees yer game. Dis jewelry ain't real—ye're 'passin' out counterfeits. *(Holds up pearl necklace.)*

GLORIA. Oh, oh! You horrid thing! Nobody but Mama knew it wasn't real!

MYRTLE and IRENE. What?

SLADE. I t'ought so! Come on, now, I don't want dis wort'less junk—I wants der real goods.

MYRTLE. *(Whispers)* Irene!

IRENE. What?

MYRTLE. How does he know my diamond pendant's made of glass?

IRENE. Shh! I don't know, dear. Perhaps Mrs. Chadwick told him.

MYRTLE. Well, if she did, I can tell you that everything she wears is false. Why, even her smile is false.

TOGAN. Come on now. We see der trick. Tell us where all de valuables in de house is.

GLORIA. Everything?

SLADE. Yep, everyt'ing. And be quick about it, too——

GLORIA. Well, let me see. Gerald's aunt keeps all her cash in that drawer. *(Points to drawer.)*

TOGAN. *(Goes to drawer and looks in it)* Aw, come off dat stuff. Dere ain't not'ing in it. *(Goes to GLORIA.)*

GLORIA. Yes, but there's a false bottom. Let me show you. *(Takes TOGAN's hand and goes to drawer. Bus.)* There, don't you see? *(TOGAN jumps.)* A real burglar would have discovered it. *(Hands money to TOGAN.)*

SLADE. What else's loose?

IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR 77

GLORIA. Well, let me see. You have all the silver?

SLADE. All we saw. (GLORIA *inspects silver.*)

GLORIA. Yes, that's all of it. Now I can't think of anything else. Can you, girls?

MYRTLE. Oh; yes, I think your mother has your father's railroad bonds here somewhere.

GLORIA. Oh, yes, that's right. She has. (*Starts L.*) Wait a minute.

TOGAN. (*To GLORIA*) Where're yer goin'?

GLORIA. I'm going to ask Mama where the bonds are. (TOGAN and SLADE *look at each other and shake heads.*)

SLADE. (*To GLORIA*) Hey! Come back here, or I'll wad ye wid dis! (*Taps gun. GLORIA returns.*)

GLORIA. You should speak more politely.

TOGAN and SLADE. Huh? (*Bus. with each other.*)

MYRTLE. Oh, no, that's all right, Gloria. He was only pretending.

IRENE. (*To TOGAN and SLADE*) Yes, your acting is excellent. Really both of you are showing very good ability. Have you ever done anything?

TOGAN. Yes'm. We's both done ten years.

IRENE. (*Laughs*) Oh, listen to that language, girls! Really, you'd think they were both expert burglars!

SLADE. (*Insulted*) Say, miss, we's just as good burglars as dere's in de trade. Don't insult us.

MYRTLE. Oh, that's all right. You're doing fine.

TOGAN and SLADE. Huh?

GLORIA. Oh, yes, indeed. Gerald's aunt will be delighted to see you.

TOGAN and SLADE. Huh?

SLADE. Who's she?

GLORIA. The lady who invited you here.

SLADE. What? (*Takes gun. To TOGAN*) Say,

78 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

hev ye double-crossed me? I t'ought dere wus some-
t'ing funny about dis!

TOGAN. Huh? (*Takes gun.*) Aw, it's you what's
double crossed me! No lady invited me here.

SLADE. Huh?

TOGAN. Huh? (*Both register.*) Say, Slade,
what's de use uv dis? We knows each uv us is an
honest man. (*Both put guns back.*)

TOGAN. I'd hate ter t'ink ye were crooked. (*In-
dicates girls.*) But what about dem?

SLADE. I don't know. I t'inks we had better lock
'em in de room out dere. (*Points R.*)

TOGAN. (*Nods*) Now, ladies, we's got ter ask ye
ter put up yer fins ag'in. (*Girls raise hands.*)

GLORIA. If you think best.

TOGAN. And what's more, keep 'em up! (*Taps
gun dangerously.*) Or if ye don't, I'll shoot!

GIRLS. (*Admiringly*) Splendid!

MYRTLE. Aren't they doing well? I tell you,
you're born actors.

TOGAN. (*Angry*) Keep still, dere!

GIRLS. Oh! Oh!

IRENE. Isn't he impolite!

SLADE. (*Points gun*) Now see here. All you
young ladies git back inter yer room, and keep quiet
fer half an hour.

TOGAN. Yep, if you's as much as lets out one
whisper, we'll pump ye all full of lead. (*Goes R.*)
Back up, dere!

GLORIA. (*Goes to TOGAN*) Oh, you don't under-
stand. You want to be real rough to me.

TOGAN. (*Roughly*) Git back, dere!

SLADE. Wid de rest uv de nuts!

GLORIA. What? But you don't under——

TOGAN. Git back, dere!

GLORIA. (*Sniffles*) Sir! I'll tell Mama on you,
and I'm sure she'll have you discharged.

IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR 79

TOGAN. Huh? (*GIRLS and TOGAN exit R. off stage.*) Back in dat room dere.

GLORIA. (*Off stage R.*) But don't you want Mama's bonds?

TOGAN. I'll git 'em meself. (*Enter TOGAN R.*) I locked 'em in de room dere.

(*Heavy footsteps L. Enter COREY, wearing heavy boots as in Act II. COREY is dressed ridiculously as burglar, with shotgun strapped across shoulder, and carrying lit lantern in one hand and slippers and flashlight in other.*)

COREY. (*Sets down lantern, indicates slippers*) Hi t'ought Hi wouldn't put these hon afore Hi got 'ere. (*TOGAN and SLADE cover COREY with guns.*) Ho! (*Drops everything.*)

TOGAN. Hands up, dere! (*COREY raises hands.*) Frisk him, Slade.

SLADE. (*Searches COREY*) Who are ye? Tell de truth now.

COREY. (*Swallows*) Your 'onor, Hi's han innocent gardener.

TOGAN. Huh? (*Both register.*)

SLADE. (*Examines gun*) Say, dis gun is loaded wid beans!

TOGAN. What? (*SLADE sets shotgun in corner.*)

SLADE. (*Searches COREY, and takes out silk stocking*) Hey, what's dis?

COREY. Ho, sir, Hi brought that to carry haway the silver hin.

SLADE. And w'at's dis? (*Takes out enormous bomb from COREY's pocket.*)

COREY. (*Swallows*) Please, your 'onor, Hi thought hall burglars wore bombs.

SLADE. Ye did, hey? Well, ye'll git anodder t'ink comin'. Come over here. (*Drags COREY down c. TOGAN comes up with rope.*)

80 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

COREY. (*Swallows*) Ho! Pardon me, sir, but w'at his the rope for?

TOGAN. Ye'll see in a minute. (*TOGAN and SLADE bind COREY.*)

COREY. Ho, sirs, but Hi's hafraid your 'onors don't hunderstand. Hi wus just han 'onest man, 'oping to pick hup ha few hextra dollars by bein' ha burglar.

SLADE. Dat's all right, but a good burglar don't pick a house what's already been robbed.

COREY. Ho, ho, ho, sir! Do you mean you're real thieves?

SLADE. What!

TOGAN. He must be nutty, too. (*COREY is bound. COREY sniffles.*)

SLADE. Cut it out!

COREY. (*Sniffles*) Ho, ho, sir! Hi can't but t'ink, sir, hif my wife should see me now, sir, w'at 'u'doshe say, sir! (*COREY shivers. Enter TED and GERALD L.. TED and GERALD may have on smoking jackets. GERALD has sport colored bathrobe.*)

TED. (*Cheerfully*) Oh, hello!

TOGAN and SLADE. (*Take guns out*) Hands up! (*TED and GERALD raise hands.*)

TED. Say, you don't understand. You are supposed to be afraid of me.

TOGAN and SLADE. (*Jump*) Huh?

SLADE. Anodder nut!

GERALD. (*To TED*) Oh, I see what they mean. They're waiting for you to go over and cow them before they run.

COREY. (*With back to TED and GERALD*) Ho, dear! Ho, dear! (*Business. TOGAN and SLADE look at COREY.*)

TED. No, I don't want to frighten them off till Alice comes out.

GERALD. But you can rehearse now.

TED. So I can. (*Goes to TOGAN and SLADE—*

dramatically) Say! You vile wretches—you scum of the earth!

TOGAN *and* SLADE. Huh?

TED. Begone! Both of you! (*Waves arms. Does not look at TOGAN and SLADE, who walk toward him with guns.*) If you don't, I will—— (*Sees TOGAN and SLADE. Jumps and swallows.*) Ah——

TOGAN. Stick up dem fins uv yours, little boy!

TED. Ah! (*Swallows and raises hands.*)

SLADE. Let's see what yer got. (*Searches TED. Feels something on inside pocket.*) What's dat?

TED. Oh, don't take that out, please. (*SLADE takes out marriage license.*)

TOGAN. What is it, Slade?

SLADE. A marriage license. What were ye doin' wid dat?

TED. What was I doing with that? Well, don't you know what you're here for?

TOGAN. You bet we does.

TED. Well, aren't you Corey's great uncles or something?

SLADE. What? Who's Corey?

TED *and* GERALD. What? (*TED and GERALD look at each other.*)

SLADE. What?

TED. Oh—er—nothing.

GERALD. (*Softly*) No—nothing.

COREY. (*Sniffles. To GERALD*) Ho, sir. Wus this ha part hof the plot, sir? See w'at han hun-fortunate condition Hi's hin, sir.

SLADE. (*To COREY*) Pipe down, there, you! (*To TED*) Line up alongside uv him.

TED. (*Meekly goes to COREY*) Yes, sir. (*GERALD laughs at TED.*)

SLADE. (*Wheel on GERALD*) You, too!

GERALD. (*Meekly goes to TED*) Yes, sir.

TOGAN. (*Searches GERALD*) Let's see what you's

got on you. What's dis? (*Takes out girl's picture.*)

GERALD. Oh, please don't take that.

TED. Margaret's picture! (TOGAN *tosses picture on floor near GERALD, who tries to secretly reach it with his foot.*)

COREY. Ho, Mister Gerald, Hi's—Hi's so werry cold! (*Shivers.*)

GERALD. Say, Mr.—Mr.—er—Income Tax Gatherer!

TOGAN. Huh?

GERALD. This gentleman at my left is catching his death of cold. He's not used to night parties like this. Would you mind letting him wear my bathrobe?

TOGAN. Aw——

SLADE. Sure, let him. He's likely ter shake de plaster down.

TOGAN. All right. (*Puts bathrobe around COREY.*)

COREY. (*Mournfully*) Thank you, sir.

TOGAN. Aw, pipe down.

SLADE. Togan, you keep dem birds quiet, while I collect dese. (*Gathers jewels.*)

TOGAN. All right. (*Looks at SLADE more than TED and GERALD.*) Dere's one under de table dere. (*SLADE picks bracelet up from under table.*)

GERALD. (*Out of side of mouth*) I say, Ted.

TED. (*Out of side of mouth*) Yes?

GERALD. They're real thieves, aren't they?

TOGAN. (*To TED*) What?

TED. I say, my good man——

TOGAN. Aw, cut out de blarney.

TED. There's a little misunderstanding here.

TOGAN and SLADE. (*Jump*) What?

TED. You see, we are—er—two thieves ourselves.

TOGAN and SLADE. What?

GERALD. Yes, we steal girls' pictures and marriage licenses as our specialty.

TED. Yes. We are—er—two poor young men, trying to earn our way honestly through college.

COREY. W'at's that, sir? (*Registers.*) 'E wus to give me one 'undred dollars. 'Ow can 'e hif 'e's poor? (GERALD *secretly* kicks COREY.)

SLADE. What's dat?

TED. That's what we are—two green young burglars.

GERALD. Yes, and we'd like to go into partnership with you.

TOGAN and SLADE. Huh?

TED. Yes. We don't want to compete against you.

GERALD. No, we don't want to run you out of business.

TOGAN. Huh! A lot of danger!

GERALD. Well, would you mind teaching us?

SLADE. What d'ye say, Togan?

TOGAN. Well, I dunno. (*To TED*) Ye say ye're two poor fellers workin' yer way through college?

TED. Yes.

COREY. (*Weeps*) Ho, my 'undred dollars!

GERALD. (*Kicks COREY*) Shut up!

COREY. (*Weeps—to GERALD*) Hand now 'e kicks me hin the bargain hin the be'ind!

GERALD. Shut up! I'll give you more than that, to boot.

TOGAN. Poor devils, wasting deir time in college. I might have gone to college meself if I hadn't been lucky enough ter git dis position.

SLADE. Well, Togan, seein' as dese guys say dey're workin' deir way through college, I suppose we orter help 'em out.

TOGAN. Dat's what I say. Specially since they hain't asked us ter buy somet'ing.

SLADE. All right, den. Come here, you two guys. We'll admit ye into de burglars' brotherhood. (*Shake*

hands.) We hope ye'll turn out ter be active and useful members.

GERALD *and* TED. Yes, yes.

COREY. (*Sniffles*) Ho, ho, sirs! Hi's hashamed to 'ave known you, sirs.

SLADE. (*To TOGAN*) Say, take that—(*Points to COREY*)—waterspout—(*COREY registers*)—out and lock him in a room. One uv you young fellers better go wid Togan and see what ye can dig up.

GERALD. I'll go.

TOGAN. (*To COREY*). Come dis way, Niagara Falls. (*TOGAN, GERALD and COREY leave R.*)

(*Enter AUNT and MRS. CHADWICK L.*)

SLADE. (*Takes gun*) Hands up!

AUNT *and* MRS. CHADWICK. (*Bored—raise hands*) Oh, certainly.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Laughs*) Isn't this amusing?

AUNT. (*Laughs*) Yes, you'd think he meant it.

SLADE. (*Jumps*) Hey! (*Enter TOGAN R.*)

TOGAN. What's up?

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, I thought you only got one burglar.

AUNT. So I did! It's very peculiar. (*Sees TED.*) Oh, oh! Theodore! What? Why—what, is Gerald here?

TED. Madam, who are you? We are total strangers. My name is Guzzbug.

AUNT *and* MRS. CHADWICK. What?

SLADE. Pipe down dere.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Nods encouragingly*) Splendid, my man! You're acting is very fine.

TOGAN. Huh? No, I t'ink one uv you's got some railroad bonds. Fork 'em over.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Laughs*) Oh, bless my soul! If they don't want to use my husband's railroad

bonds! Now see, Agnes, how wise I was to bring them here. My husband didn't want me to.

TOGAN. Come on now, where is dey?

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, do you really want them?

TOGAN. Aw——

MRS. CHADWICK. I'll be very glad to get them for you if they'll be of any use to you. (*Starts L.*)

AUNT. I'll get the girls up.

MRS. CHADWICK. All right, dear.

SLADE. Pardon me, but I'll go wid ye fur dem bonds.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Smiles*) Charmed, I'm sure.

(SLADE *jumps*. *He and* MRS. CHADWICK *leave at L.*
AUNT *goes R.*)

TOGAN. (*To* AUNT) Hey! (*Points gun.*)

AUNT. Oh! You do that very realistically! Er, I am going out to call the young ladies. You know they're necessary—(*Laughs.*) You are here to get their jewels, you know.

TOGAN. Huh? (*AUNT goes R.*) I'll go wid ye.

AUNT. Very well, you may come out in the hall, but I can't allow you in the girls' room.

TOGAN. (*Jumps*) Huh? (*AUNT and* TOGAN *leave R. Enter* GERALD *R.*)

GERALD. (*To* TED) Gee, but Auntie nearly saw me. I just ducked in time.

(*Enter* ALICE, MARGARET *and* TOGAN *R.*)

TOGAN. (*Pushing in* ALICE *and* MARGARET) Git in dere—and keep still. (*ALICE and* MARGARET *terrified. They see* TED *and* GERALD *and try to leave R.*) Git in dere! (*TOGAN pushes them back. To* GERALD *and* TED) Hey, buddies! Keep an eye on dese two. (*To* ALICE *and* MARGARET) Pardon me,

86 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

ladies, but—(*Points to TED and GERALD*)—dese two fellers are apprentice burglars——

MARGARET. Burglars! Alice, those reports were true!

TOGAN. Yep, dey're helping us on dis job.

MARGARET. (*To GERALD*) Shame on you!

TOGAN. (*To ALICE and MARGARET*) You do just as dey tell ye to. Understand? (*To GERALD and TED*) I'm watching out in de hall, buddies. (*Exits R. MARGARET and ALICE stand R. GERALD and TED stand C. Picture. GERALD and TED go to them and take them down stage C.*)

TED. Alice, you must listen to me now. They're real burglars here, and you can't get away.

ALICE. That's the only reason why I'm listening.

TED. Oh! (*Swallows.*) Ah—er—Alice, you don't understand how it happened.

ALICE. (*Icily*) Anybody that would propose to four girls at one time should remain a bachelor.

TED. Alice! You're terribly sarcastic. Listen to me, Alice. I—I did it for your sake!

ALICE. That's sarcasm.

TED. No, it isn't. It's the truth!

GERALD. He's right, Alice. I'm to blame. (*MARGARET starts to leave GERALD.*)

MARGARET. (*To GERALD*) I hate you more than ever now.

GERALD. (*Holds MARGARET*) You must stay. Remember the thieves.

MARGARET. Yes, shame on you—to help rob your aunt's house! (*Tries to get away.*)

GERALD. Margaret! You don't understand! We're not burglars! Listen. I'll make a clean breast of it. To begin with, I hired Ted to do the proposing to save me from getting engaged!

ALICE and MARGARET. Gerald!

GERALD. It's true! It's true! I—I told Ted I'd divvy my ten million with him if he would! And

we're not thieves—we're pretending we are only before the burglars themselves! Honestly, girls, that's the truth.

TED. Yes, it is. Alice, forgive me! I—I love only you! I only proposed to those girls to save Gerald! I hate them!

ALICE. But why would you do a thing like that—just for money?

TED. Do you know what I was going to do with the money?

ALICE. No. What?

TED. Build a bungalow just big enough for two—and marry you!

ALICE. Oh!

TED. Alice, will you believe me? Will you forgive me, Alice?

ALICE. (*Looks down*) Ted, I—I——

TED. Yes, Alice?

ALICE. I just love bungalows.

TED. (*Takes ALICE in his arms and kisses her*) Alice!

GERALD. Margaret! It's high time that I speak for myself! Those scandals Ted said about me were false, weren't they, Ted?

TED. (*Looks up from kissing ALICE*) What was that? I was busy.

GERALD. Am I a bad character?

TED. Gracious, don't ask me. How do I know?

GERALD. Ted!

TED. Oh, ah, you mean were those things so I said about you? (*GERALD nods. To MARGARET*) No, Margaret, really they weren't. They were part of my scheme to keep the girls away from him.

GERALD. And it worked beautifully—with the wrong girl! (*Looks at watch.*) Margaret, it's just ten minutes of twelve. If I don't propose for ten minutes, nobody can get my ten million away from me. But—to show you that I love you, Margaret,

88 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

you—you can have my ten million—if you take me along with it. Margaret, will you marry me? (*She hesitates.*)

ALICE. Hurry up, dear, if you want that ten million.

TED. Ten million in ten minutes. That isn't a bad rate of pay. I'd be willing to start out on that when I graduate.

MARGARET. Oh—oh—Alice—Gerald—I—I don't want your ten million. What I want is love—and Gerald!

GERALD. Dearest! (*Takes MARGARET in his arms and kisses her.*) Dearest! (*Kisses her again.*) Dearest! (*Kisses her again.*) Will you marry me?

TED. (*Gives long whistle*) Eight minutes to go and still he asks her! He sure must love her.

GERALD. (*To MARGARET*) Will you?

MARGARET. No! (*GERALD jumps.*) I don't want your money! Therefore I refuse to accept you before midnight.

TED. (*Starts and slaps hand smartly to forehead*) Love is blind!

GERALD. Dearest! I'm so glad you put it that way! (*Kisses MARGARET.*)

ALICE. (*To TED*) Did you see that kiss he gave Margaret? He did it very nicely.

TED. Yes, he had practice this afternoon.

ALICE and MARGARET. What?

GERALD. Ted! Ah!

TED. Playing golf.

MARGARET. What! (*To GERALD*) I didn't know you were out at the country club, dear.

TED. Oh, no, he practiced in this room.

GERALD. Ted! Ah!

ALICE. Oh, yes, I've often heard of men being so interested in golf that they even practice in their room.



IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR 89

GERALD. Yes, that's it, Alice. That's fine, Alice. You're all right.

ALICE. Why the sudden compliments?

TED. He's complimenting you on getting me.

GERALD. Not much. Especially after what I saw this afternoon.

ALICE. What?

TED. Er—ah——

GERALD. Right in this room, too. While I was practicing golf.

TED. Er—oh, I say, Gerald, let's call it quits.

ALICE. What are you two talking about? Is it still this golf practice?

GERALD. Oh, yes. And his caddie was wonderful, Alice.

TED. Gerald!

GERALD. Well, how do you like your own medicine?

ALICE. Medicine? I thought it was golf.

TED. Say, Gerald—er—what—what are we going to do about these thieves? What are you going to do about these thieves?

GERALD. Let me think—— Oh, I know what to do.

ALICE and MARGARET. What?

GERALD. Now listen. Both of you girls go and flirt with the thieves.

ALICE and MARGARET. Do you mean it?

TED. Sure—that ought to be easy for you.

ALICE and MARGARET. Oh!

GERALD. Then Ted and I will go up and take their guns. Then leave the rest to us. Shh!

(Enter SLADE and MRS. CHADWICK L.—SLADE has bonds.)

MRS. CHADWICK. So I was really very surprised to see two of you here.

90 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

SLADE. Aw, I don't care whether ye were or not. Sst, Togan!

(Enter TOGAN R.)

TOGAN. Huh?

SLADE. Look here. Dat guy you's got locked up out dere—*(Points R.)*—ain't no burglar.

TOGAN. No? Den I'll bring him in. *(Exits R. AUNT enters R.)*

AUNT. It's all right. Gloria will be out in just a minute. She's just finishing her complexion. *(To SLADE)* You're doing your work beautifully.

TOGAN. Aw, pipe down on dat stuff.

AUNT. Sir! Speak to me respectfully! *(Enter COREY and TOGAN R.)* If you speak in an ungentlemanly manner again, I'll make you apologize in public.

SLADE. Listen to her rave! *(SLADE and TOGAN laugh.)*

MRS. CHADWICK. Agnes, I wouldn't stand for their impertinence! *(SLADE and TOGAN roar.)*

SLADE. *(Slaps TOGAN very hard. TOGAN jumps in hurt manner, then smiles)* Ha, ha! Dey must be nutty, too!

AUNT. Sirs! You're discharged!

COREY. Ho, ho, marm! Be careful w'at you says, marm!

AUNT. *(Looks at COREY)* Oh, oh, Corey! Have you lost your arms? *(The arms in the bathrobe hang loose, as COREY's hands are tied behind him.)*

SLADE. *(To AUNT)* Keep quiet, dere!

AUNT and MRS. CHADWICK. Oh! Oh! Are you real burglars?

TOGAN and SLADE. What!

TOGAN. *(Registers)* Say, Slade, does we look queer, or why doesn't dey take us fer burglars?

IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR 91

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, oh, oh! They're real! Agnes, they're real!

TOGAN. Sure. Did ye t'ink we wus spirits?

SLADE. We's ready ter blow dis joint. (*To TED*) Say, buddy, find de switch in de hall, and when you does, put out dese lights. Den we'll skip.

TED. Right-o! I'll put the lights out. (*Exits R.*)

TOGAN. (*To SLADE*) We orter tie up all dese birds around here, or we can't make a good getaway.

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh, oh! I wish my husband were here instead of me!

TOGAN. (*To SLADE*) If we's goin' ter tie 'em all up we'll need ter rob a rope store fust.

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Looks at watch*) Oh, dear! Oh, dear! It's just three minutes of twelve! Gloria still has a chance!

SLADE. (*Bus. To MRS. CHADWICK*) Pipe down, dere!

MRS. CHADWICK. Oh! Agnes, save me! (*Falls into AUNT'S arms.*)

AUNT. Help! (*SLADE rushes up. AUNT falls on SLADE, with MRS. CHADWICK still in AUNT'S arms.*)

SLADE. (*Trying to lift burden*) Help!

GERALD. Certainly. (*Goes to SLADE.*) Just let me have your gun, and I'll help.

SLADE. (*Short of breath*) Nix on dat stuff, buddy. (*Puffs.*) A new thief has got to prove he's on de level before he can be trusted.

AUNT. Oh! Oh! Gerald, this is terrible! (*MRS. CHADWICK still in AUNT'S arms. AUNT leans on SLADE.*)

GERALD. (*Helps SLADE*) I'll say it is. Help!

TOGAN. (*Laughs*) Slade, it's lucky yer wife can't see yer.

SLADE. (*To TOGAN*) Aw, come over and help me. I can't hold up six hundred pounds all night.

TOGAN. (*Goes to SLADE and helps him*) Gee. I wish we'd brought more rope. (*GERALD goes to COREY and loosens him, and wraps bathrobe around COREY so that he still appears tied.*)

MRS. CHADWICK. (*Bus.*) Oh, ah! ah, ah! oh, dear!

SLADE. (*To MRS. CHADWICK*) Keep quiet. We don't want ter disturb de neighbors. (*Looks at GERALD.*) Hey, what are ye doing?

GERALD. Getting a rope for you. (*Goes to SLADE with rope.*) Here you are.

SLADE. (*Nods admiringly to TOGAN*) Say, he'll make a good burglar.

(*COREY slips on bathrobe correctly.*)

GERALD. Yes. Just give me time and I'll surprise you. (*Lights go out.*)

SLADE. Good! He found de switch, all right.

(*Enter TED at R. TED stands near R. door and flashes flashlight into face of GLORIA and IRENE, who enter R. TED catches IRENE.*)

TED. (*Whispers*) Irene! Sneak out in the hall and when you hear anybody say, Hands up! snap on the lights. (*IRENE nods and exits R.*)

MRS. CHADWICK. (*As TOGAN flashes light into GLORIA's face*) Oh, is that you, Gloria? Be quick—it's one minute of twelve!

GLORIA. I will! Where's the sport-colored bathrobe? (*Sees COREY.*) Oh, there it is! (*Rushes into COREY's arms.*) Save me, dearest! Save me! Dearest! Say you will marry me, dearest! (*COREY and GLORIA embrace, and can be heard to kiss.*)

MRS. CHADWICK. Gloria, that's not——

TOGAN. Pipe down, dere!

GLORIA. Oh, Mama! He said it! He said it! He said he'd marry me!

TOGAN. Pipe down!

GLORIA. (*To COREY*) And I have you before twelve o'clock, haven't I, dearest?

COREY. Hi'll say so, marm.

(*MARGARET and ALICE are pantomiming to SLADE and TOGAN. GERALD and TED snatch guns from SLADE and TOGAN.*)

GERALD and TED. Hands up! (*Lights go on. TOGAN and SLADE raise hands. MRS. CHADWICK and AUNT raise hands, then lower them hesitatingly. GERALD has left arm around MARGARET. TED has left arm around ALICE. GLORIA is seen kissing COREY as lights go on. Clock strikes twelve. Picture.*)

GLORIA. (*Screams and jumps back*) Oh, Mama! See what I was kissing!

GERALD. People! It's past midnight—and I'm a man! I've won my ten million! I've also won something far more precious! Listen, everybody. Margaret, will you marry me?

MARGARET. Are you sure it's after twelve?

GERALD. Yes, dear.

MARGARET. (*Looks up into GERALD's face and kisses him*) Then I'll say yes, dear. (*TOGAN and SLADE move.*)

GERALD. (*To TOGAN and SLADE*) Stand still, there!

TED. (*To GERALD*) Yes, you watch them. It's my turn now. (*Kisses ALICE. TED takes long breath.*) Oh, I tell you, when it comes to kissing, there's nothing that helps you like a college education! (*To GERALD*) Go ahead, Gerald, kiss her again. I'll watch these birds. (*MARGARET takes a deep breath and gets ready for kiss.*)

GERALD. No. (*MARGARET registers.*) We must attend to these crooks. Corey!

COREY. (*Jumps ridiculously*) Yes, sir?

94 IT'S TERRIBLE TO BE POPULAR

GERALD. Rush out and get the police as quick as those boots will let you navigate!

COREY. Right haway, sir! (*Runs L. and stumbles.*)

TED. And bring a minister, too! (*COREY exits L.*)

GERALD. Yes. (*Kisses MARGARET. TED kisses ALICE.*)

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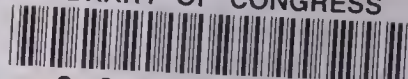
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Clarence has no medals, no shouldered bars, no great accomplishment. One of the "five million," he served where he was sent—though it was no further than Texas. As an entomologist he found—on this side of the ocean—no field for his specialty in the great war. So they set him to driving mules.

Now, reduced to civil life and seeking a job, he finds a position in the home of one, Wheeler, a wealthy Englewood man with a family. And because he'd "been in the army" he becomes guide, philosopher and friend to the members of that same agitated and distracted family group. Clarence's position is an anomalous one. He mends the bathroom plumbing, he tunes the piano, he types—off stage—he plays the saxophone. And around him revolves such a group of characters as only Booth Tarkington could offer. It is a real American comedy; and the audience ripples with appreciative and delighted laughter.

Those marvelous young people, Cora and Bobby Wheeler, are portrait sketches warranted to appeal to every one but the originals. Their truth will be lost on the "Flapper" and the "prep" school youth, but to their parents and guardians, to all, indeed, who have emerged from the serious, self-conscious, period of adolescence, they will be an enduring joy.

"Clarence" is a real delight. It is as American as "Huckleberry Finn" or pumpkin pie. It is as delightful as any native comedy which has tried to lure the laughter of this country in the last ten seasons.

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Three Live Ghosts

A comedy in three acts by Frederick Isham and Max Marcin. 6 males, 4 females (2 policemen). One interior scene stands throughout the three acts. Costumes, modern. Plays 2½ hours.

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